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## The University Studies

The Progress of Labor Organization Among  
Women, Together with Some Considerations  
Concerning Their Place in Industry

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### WOMEN IN THE EARLIER LABOR MOVEMENT

That women have taken some part in the strikes and agitation of the earlier days of the labor movement is not to be doubted, but the probable results of a serious study of their activities are so slight in comparison with the exertions required that this investigation has been confined to the era of Unionism beginning with the late eighties. The following bits of information may be of interest, however, as suggestive of general conditions in earlier times.<sup>1</sup> Between 1815 and 1830 the textile industry of the country was passing out of the home into the factory and women and children who had been the chief workers under the old household system followed the trade into the mills. For the first few years the cotton manufacturers in New England made unusual efforts to establish in their mills such good moral and physical surroundings that respectable girls would be attracted thither from their country homes; this was especially necessary because of the rumors of disgraceful conditions in the English factories which had reached this country and roused a feeling against the new system of industry. The fairly comfortable ways of living secured by the care of the employers, together with the prospect of earning money and the attraction of town as compared with country life, were effective in bringing into the mills that intelligent class of girls whose industry, attractive address, and literary ambitions were the subject of so much admiring comment from both American and English visitors. That all of the surplus energies of these thrifty Yankee maidens should

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<sup>1</sup> The sources of this information are the following books: First Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor, 1870; Wright, C. D. Industrial Evolution of the United States, McNeill, G. E. Labor Movement; New Jersey Bureau of Labor, Tenth Report, 1887; American Journal of Sociology 3: 133 etc. Also an interview with Mr. McNeill.



have been spent on literary clubs and papers, rather than in efforts to better their industrial position is not strange, for they were, on the whole, contented with their low wages, which left a small margin every month to be hoarded for the *trousseau* or for paying off the mortgage on the family farm; moreover, they came from country homes untouched by the labor agitation which was causing uneasiness in a few cities. Unhappily the days of Lucy Larcom and the "Lowell Offering" were only a transient phase of American factory life; the Irish immigrants, present in small numbers from the first, became a larger and larger factor in mill labor as the years went on, pushing out the native American with his higher standard of living and accomplishing by the later forties an almost complete substitution of Irish for native workers. Even during this period there was considerable dissatisfaction with industrial conditions among wage earners and organizations were formed for shortening hours and raising wages. From 1830 to 1835 the general unrest expressed itself in numerous strikes, in which female employees often took part, but in the general agitation in the interests of labor from 1825 to 1850 women apparently had little share. Labor newspapers were established; conventions were held at which large questions affecting labor in a more or less general way were discussed, and political organizations and alliances with existing parties were formed. Most of these meetings and organizations were quite beyond the sphere of women's interests, but that there was some participation in the activities is shown by the presence of Sarah Bagley as a delegate of the Female Labor Reform Association of Lowell, at the First Industrial Congress in the United States, in 1845. A number of women were active in the ten hour movement in Massachusetts, which was begun in the same year and resulted, after a long struggle, in the Act of 1874, limiting the working day of women and children in factories to ten hours. Mr. George McNeill is responsible for the statement that after 1845 the activity of the working women themselves died out.



The early organization of the boot and shoe workers, the Knights of St. Crispin, had auxiliaries among the women, known as the "Ladies of St. Crispin." The Knights of Labor, in 1879, two years after their organization, at their third General Assembly, discussed a resolution to admit women and to form assemblies for them on the same conditions as men; but the motion failed the two-thirds vote necessary for amending the constitution. At the next session the General Assembly passed the resolution and appointed a committee to form a ritual for the government of women's assemblies, but the report of this committee was not made the following year and the Master Workman decided that they should be admitted on an equality with men. This action was taken at the same meeting at which it was decided to make public the name and principles of the organization, that is, at a time when a more rational and stable basis of the Union was agreed upon.

The liberal policy of the Knights was not at once followed by other organizations; indeed, the attitude of both British and American Unions toward the women in their trades had been until recent years far from generous, but this conduct is easily explained upon the premise of ordinary human nature on the part of the Unionists, for women have often entered the field of competition with men under circumstances that were particularly trying. In many trades they have been introduced at less than a "living wage," after the men by strenuous efforts have succeeded in establishing and maintaining standard rates and when their employment had been simply a means of escape from such a scale. Sometimes they have been employed to break a strike and have so incurred the hatred felt for all "scabs." Again, they have entered a trade together with new machinery as a substitute for trained laborers and have become the object of that same very natural, if not very reasonable, dislike felt for the machines themselves. Thus as a weapon in the hands of the employer and as a factor in the new and cheap methods which the skilled workman despises and dreads, wom-



en's work has roused considerable antagonism on the part of wage earning men, whether in the Unions or not. Strengthening these direct and personal motives has existed the general disapproval of wives and daughters going outside the home to work. This feeling is, however, disappearing as Trade Unionists recognize the inevitableness of women's becoming a permanent part of the present system of industry. Nearly all Unions now pursue the policy of bringing the women of the trade into the organization and thus making them a manageable and measurable factor in negotiations with employers. This change in attitude has taken place in both British and American Unions, but that the conversion has not been complete is seen in the fact that some organizations still prohibit their members from working in shops where women are employed<sup>1</sup>. In 1899 the Boston Core Makers threatened to strike on account of the employment of girls; and the constitution of the Upholsterers forbids the members to work where girls are employed otherwise than as seamstresses. These conditions are exceptional and the great majority of American Unions connected with trades in which women are employed provide for admitting them upon the same terms as men. In some cases, to be sure, lower dues and benefits are the rule, as in the organizations of the Bookbinders, the Potters, and the Clerks. Within the "Nationals" or "Internationals" women are either in separate or mixed locals; the ordinary arrangement is that separate locals are formed for the main divisions of the trade, and since women's work is to a good degree distinct from men's, their Unions are practically women's organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 17: 247, 323.



## II. WOMEN IN THE PRINCIPAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS AFFILIATED WITH THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

### THE BOOT AND SHOE WORKERS' UNION

The boot and shoe trade of the United States is an industry of considerable significance, not only because it supplies a necessity of civilized life to our 75,000,000 population, but also because of the excellence of the product, which has been recognized the world over, and has created a large export trade. In 1900 the total value of the product was \$261,000,000,<sup>1</sup> and the number of persons employed was 142,920. The gradual introduction of marvelously effective machines together with a minute subdivision of labor has reduced the cost of the product and revolutionized the character of the tasks involved. The traditional shoe maker has been supplanted, not by a set of unskilled laborers, but by a whole series of workers, ranging in equipment of intelligence and dexterity from the heedless lad of fourteen who fills the heeling machine with pegs to the skilled cutter upon whose nicety of judgment will depend the profit of a pair of shoes. These changes in processes have naturally brought into the trade a larger number of women and children; for while many of the machines still require attendants who have strength and skill, the tendency of invention is to simplify tasks. To a considerable extent women have taken the place of men in operating the lighter machines, while children now perform the work that women were doing heretofore; and, since a larger part of the work is done by these cheaper classes of workers, a reduction of total wages paid has necessarily followed. These considerations partly explain the fact

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<sup>1</sup>Twelfth Census: Manufactures, 3: 760.



that in the decade from 1890-1900 the number of wage earners increased 6.9 per cent and the value of products 18.3 per cent, while the total wages decreased 2.5 per cent, although the purchase of a larger part of the stock of soles must also be recognized as accounting for some of this apparent decline. The proportion of men in the trade fell from 68.4 per cent in 1890 to 63.8 per cent in 1900; women rose from 29.8 to 33 per cent and children from 1.8 per cent to 3.2 per cent. In Massachusetts the employment of children between fourteen and sixteen has remained practically stationary, owing to the better enforcement of laws and to the feeling against child labor in that State. But while women are slowly encroaching upon the men's field of work, there is little direct competition between the sexes at any given time, and the most recent innovation noticed by a visitor to the factories is the employment of Jewish and Armenian men in the women's domain.

The delimitation of women's work in boot and shoe making is fairly clear and may be briefly described. The management of stock, consideration of models and cutting of leather and lining are tasks of skilled men, who work in the quiet of a room where there is little machinery; the numerous parts of the upper, tied into methodically arranged bundles, pass to the fitting room, where linings are glued to outers, edges are beveled, buttonholes or eyelets made and the parts are sewed together to form a complete upper. In the ordinary shop this work is done by women entirely. The processes vary in the skill required from the simple pasting together of bits of cloth and leather to the nice task of vamping, that is, sewing vamps to uppers without guide lines. In the last division of the work is comprised the making of the sole and heel—which has been blocked out in the cutting room—and the fastening of the uppers to the sole, or lasting. These tasks are carried on through elaborate processes by means of complicated machines, in the management of which strength and skill are required, and hence they are unsuited to women's capacities. Women



are not considered as possibilities in the cutting room; although in the stress of some peculiar labor difficulties one or two were tried in one of the Massachusetts factories last year; lacking experience, they were naturally not successful. The importance of the cutter's skill is easily realized when one remembers that by a slight carelessness in laying his patterns, he may waste more than his day's wages.

According to the report of those who had lived there for years, social conditions in the shoe towns of Massachusetts are healthy and encouraging. An intelligent Lynn woman, who had been one of the factory girls and had continued to take a great interest in their welfare, thinks that there is no place where there are so few social discriminations made against the factory operatives and where she may lead as interesting and pleasant a life outside of factory hours. Other persons cited instances of the girls passing from the work room to the desk of the accountant or the schoolmistress by means of the training of the night schools. In Brockton Union officials told of the quite common practice among the operatives of buying homes by installments; in order to do this the husband is often aided by his wife, who goes into the factory and earns enough to support the family while his wages are applied to the purchase of the house. In Chicago, wages are good but are menaced by the competition of smaller towns; this fact led—at the close of a recent strike—to the making of contracts without the provision for insurance against strikes and the use of the label. The Union people felt that they might lose by arbitration in which rates in the competing towns were considered and the employers were indifferent to the advertisement of the label. Nine tenths of the Chicago women shoe workers are said to be in the Union and among them are some experienced and wise leaders. Statistics of the number of married women in the trade were not obtainable.

The records of the earlier organizations of the boot and shoe operatives are difficult to obtain and of little significance in our study. Hence we pass them over and take up the Boot



and Shoe Workers' Union, which was organized in 1889 and practically reorganized, upon the Lasters' becoming amalgamated with it, in 1895. At this time there took place a strenuous contest concerning the rival policies of low or high dues and benefits; the low-dues policy won, and ten cents a week with no benefits was determined upon as a financial basis of the organization. In 1899, a new constitution was adopted which provided for twenty five cents' weekly dues, two thirds of it to go to the general treasury, and prohibited the introduction of lower dues.<sup>1</sup> A sick benefit of \$5.00 a week after the first week, a death benefit of \$50.00, or \$100.00 after two years' membership, and a strike benefit of \$4.00 a week after the first seven days, are provided for.<sup>2</sup> Since the introduction of the policy of high dues and benefits the organization has had a most encouraging growth; the membership, receipts and number of locals have doubled during the year 1902<sup>3</sup>; and during the biennium, 1902-1904, the number of label factories has increased by 71 and the number of members by 15,982.<sup>4</sup> This development has occurred in the face of very trying difficulties with local independent Unions that have refused to come into the general organization and have done much to hinder its progress.

In spite of the declaration in the preamble to the constitution in favor of the final abolition of the wage system and of the collective ownership by the people of the means of production, distribution, etc., the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union is a conservative body. The watchword of the president and of the treasurer is "maintain our contracts" and the large expense incurred in carrying into effect this policy is a proof of their sincerity. Not only in the emphasis laid upon sound finance, but also in other phases of general policy there is manifested a nice

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 17:52.

<sup>2</sup> Constitution of Boot and Shoe Workers, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> American Federationist, Jan., 1903.

<sup>4</sup> Proceedings of Sixth Convention, 21.



sense of proportion in estimating the importance of the various elements of Trade Union activity; the necessity of attending first to the poorest paid laborers, its insistence upon better system of work in factories so that laborers may not lose time and temper in waiting for work, the avoidance of strikes for small causes, all point to a high degree of business sagacity upon the part of the Union officers.

According to the President's estimate, one fifth of the members of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union are women. A comparison of the history of the local Unions in which men or women predominate would be of little significance owing to the policy of the Union in granting the label. Contracts are made with employers, according to which, in return for the use of the union stamp and a pledge upon the part of the Union to refrain from strikes, they employ only union laborers, and refer questions of wages, etc., to arbitration.<sup>1</sup> When this agreement goes into effect, of course all employes in the given factory must become members of the Union. Now, even in the factories where women's shoes are made the male operatives far outnumber the women, and the women's opinion upon the unionization of the factory needs to be considered only after the conversion of the employer and the male workers, and is not a matter of prime importance. In like manner the growth of a local Union composed largely of women may not indicate any activity upon the part of the women, but merely the fact that the general Union has been able to convince the employer that increased sales due to the label and freedom from strikes are worth what is asked for them.

The welfare of women workers is well provided for in the constitution of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union. One of the objects of the organization is stated to be the establishment of "uniform wages regardless of sex"; conditions of membership are exactly the same for both; any male or female over sixteen

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 17:109; Report of the Sixth Convention of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, 19.



actively engaged in the craft is eligible, and fees and benefits are identical.<sup>1</sup> That this policy is carried out honestly by the Union we have no reason to doubt and there appears to be no friction among the Union members because of sex. As has been pointed out, there is little direct competition between the men and women at any given time. While there is no provision for separate locals for the women, in the large shoe towns, where the trade is to a good degree unionized, they are practically segregated by the practice of organizing a local for each department. For instance, in Brockton there are ten or twelve locals; of these the stitchers and vampers organization is overwhelmingly feminine; the stitchers number twenty five hundred. Lynn is not nearly so well organized and out of the five locals only one, the stitchers, consists almost wholly of women. These women belonged to a "mixed local"—one made up of workmen doing quite different tasks—until a year ago, when they formed a separate body with two hundred and fifty members. Naturally in these women's Unions the members feel much more free in discussing Union affairs than they are in the presence of the men. They are likely to elect women officers, but it is worthy of note that of the four paid agents of the Brockton Stitchers only one is a woman. Whether the women of the local had greater confidence in the financial ability of men or whether there were no women competent for the places is not clear; from this same local there were sent to the convention of 1904 six men as representatives.

Of the interest of women in the affairs of the organization it is difficult to judge; the women and girls whom the writer met were in most cases leaders, and were firmly convinced of the efficacy of the organization as an ameliorating influence in their lives. But all complained of the indifference of the majority of the women, accusing them of frivolity and of short sightedness in not perceiving that their fair wages and other benefits were the result of Union efforts, in return for which they must make some sacrifice. Their attendance upon meet-

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<sup>1</sup> Constitution, 1902. Sections 44, 52, 53, 68, 69, etc.



ings may be taken as an indication of the degree of the active interest of the women in their locals. One Union of twenty five hundred members reported fifty as the average attendance; but the secretary said in a personal interview that the number necessary for a quorum, thirteen, was not always present. Fifty was given as the average for two locals of about one hundred and fifty each, and ten for one of two hundred. These figures are for several of the great shoe towns of Massachusetts and are probably typical. Attendance of men is proportionally much larger, but too much stress must not be laid upon the contrast, for attendance involves for the women the surmounting of greater obstacles, such as home cares, unusual fatigue, and fear of the perils of the night.

The interest shown in buying Union label goods is not encouraging in Brockton, a completely unionized town. Union officials declared that non-label shoes were sold in every store in town and that a like condition existed with regard to other goods. This indifference can not be charged to women more than to men, except in so far as they dispose of the larger part of the family income.

Another indication of women's interest in the Union is their representation in the general convention and the part they take in its deliberations; at the convention of 1904 there were one hundred and ninety delegates, of whom sixteen were women; this is a proportion of 8.4 per cent, while according to the statement of the president about twenty per cent are women. On the seven committees of nine persons each, seven members were women, or eleven per cent of the whole. They are represented on all of the committees except that on appeals and grievances and that on the constitution, two of the most important. There is one woman on the executive board of eleven and there are one or two women organizers. One of the first matters for consideration in this convention was the unfavorable report upon a proposed amendment to the constitution, providing for reduced dues for women.<sup>1</sup> Upon this sub-

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<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the Sixth Convention, p. 41.



ject four of the women spoke vigorously in favor of retaining the high dues. Upon other subjects two or three spoke several times during the convention, usually upon some subject that concerned women's interests, and always in favor of the conservative line of action.

In the judgment of the President of the Boot and Shoe Workers, whose opinion is important on account of his experience in dealing with them, women members of the Unions present no special problems and are not particularly different in disposition from the men; they are normal but somewhat differentiated units in the organization; they have little influence as factors in molding the general policy of the Union, and are not leaders in active general work; but they are sensible and likely to be "on the right side." One interesting observation made by this official was that it is harder to induce women to compromise than men; they want the exact thing they have asked for and nothing less; hence, in strikes they want to hold out to the bitter end. They are hard to convince of an error and likely to see only the details of a question—but he added "so are many of the men."

In so far as concerns women in the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, then, we would seem warranted in drawing the following conclusions:

(1) Conditions are favorable for organizing them and holding them in the organization because the policy of granting the label to manufacturers who employ only Union labor, together with the fact that men predominate in all shops, practically forces the women in a given factory to join the Union.

(2) Wages in the trade are in most places comparatively high.<sup>1</sup>

(3) While women are slightly encroaching upon men's

<sup>1</sup> In the stitching room one half of the women receive from \$10.50 to \$10.99 and over, three fourths from \$8.50 to \$8.99 and over, and one fourth above \$12.50 to \$12.99. In Lynn Union vamps make \$18.00 a week in busy season and \$12.00 when very dull; other stitchers get from \$9.00 to \$12.00. These figures indicate the possibility of a high standard of living and a spirit of independence which makes organization less difficult.—Twelfth Census, Employees and Wages, 570.



work, yet there is no great amount of direct competition and no feeling that women are a menace to men's standard of wages; this condition favors cordial relations between the sexes and makes the women less suspicious of an organization in which men predominate.

(4) The policy of equal and high dues and benefits, which for a time was opposed by women, has finally roused a sense of the power and importance of the Union.

(5) Women take an active part in management of some locals, especially where there are female officers; but officials complain of the indifference of the majority.

(6) They are not a directing force in the activities of conventions but are intelligent and conservative when they do express themselves.

#### THE TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION

Printing establishments are of two classes, quite distinct in organization, machinery, hours of labor, and wages; they are the newspaper and periodical, and the book and job offices. On all counts but number of employees and wages the newspapers and periodicals are about twice as important as the book and job trade. But for the student of women's work the newspaper office is of little interest, because of the overwhelming preponderance of men. There are a few women employed on newspapers in the large cities as machine operators or proof readers; in smaller towns they set up straight matter but are never employed as a "make up" or in the "ad room." Women press feeders are under the jurisdiction of the International Printing Pressmen.

In 1900, there were, in the newspaper and periodical offices, 73,653 men, earning nearly \$45,000,000; and 14,815 women, earning \$4,600,000, a ratio of something less than five to one in favor of the men. During the decade 1890-1900 there was a much greater increase among the women than among men,



suggesting that competition had led to a search for cheaper labor.<sup>1</sup> Comprehensive figures for the percentage of women in book and job offices are entirely wanting, but according to estimates of employers and wage earners the proportion of women is between two-thirds and one-half of the total. Of the 9,045 workers upon the linotype machine, 520 were women. A large proportion of these machines are in newspaper offices and a partial explanation of the small number of female operators in this class of work is found in the necessity for night work on all morning papers. Besides, the rush and strain of this business make it little suitable for female labor. In Boston, on two or three evening papers, women are employed on the linotype at the same wages as men, according to Union scale, \$22.26 for seven and one half hours per day or 42 hours per week.<sup>3</sup> This in spite of the fact that the president of the Typographical Union testified before the Industrial Commission that women had not the mental and physical endurance to maintain for any time the speed made by men.

In considering the division of labor between men and women in the printing trade, the most significant fact is one that does not appear in a description of the processes; it is the custom, or unwritten law, that women enter the trade as regular workers, receiving regular pay after six weeks' tuition in type-setting, while men serve an apprenticeship of four years; this means of course that women learn merely setting up plain matter, while men go through a curriculum made up of all the processes of the trade. This places the two classes upon fundamentally different bases. If the man fails to find work in one department, he has the chance of turning to another; as opportunity offers he can pass from the lower to higher grades of work with increasing remuneration. Moreover, as an all round workman, he is worth more to his employer, for he can be

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Manufactures, 3: 1044.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1106.

<sup>3</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 17:260.



turned from one kind of work to another as occasion demands. Women's work is largely confined to setting up "straight matter" and "distributing," or returning type to the proper boxes. Both processes are light, but require some education and constant attention. Imposing, or dividing the galleys into pages, is ordinarily done by men, because it involves considerable heavy lifting. So, too, locking up the properly placed pages into forms—which simply means putting a sort of frame on the collected sticks which are to constitute the page—is done by men, for the same reason. The hand or foot press upon which the trial galley is printed involves heavy work and is managed by men. In proof reading, however, no distinction is made between men and women. The work must be done by practical printers, for not only must the text be correct, but in book work it must present no awkward spacings, no piling up in ugly columns of recurring monosyllables, no improper indentations of lines or numerous other errors that would mar the appearance of the page. Of course, expert proof reading is an art not to be learned in a day, and hence the majority of readers are printers of long experience; although in a very high class printing establishment young college men are taking up proof reading, having just learned the necessary type-setting. Subordinate to the proof reader is the copy holder, who reads the manuscript or copy; this work of course requires only ability to read the text. The copy holder is nearly always a young girl who looks to learning type-setting later. Feeding the press is wearisome work, because it involves standing for a considerable time, but otherwise it requires no great strength and little skill; it is largely done by women. On the other hand, managing the press, adjusting the machine, watching its movements, etc., involves some knowledge of machinery, some dexterity and judgment, and considerable strength. It is dirty work, too, and necessitates climbing about the machines in a way that would be impossible for a woman on account of her dress. Hence, the pressmen have no competition from their sisters in

the trade. Upon the linotype machine both men and women are at work; the key board is managed in much the same way as a typewriter and the same sort of skill is required. At the bottom of the scale of workers young girls are found doing simple unskilled tasks; the smarter ones of these are given a chance to learn the trade. The preparing of frontispieces, pamphlets, advertisements, hand bills, etc., is more difficult than setting up plain matter, for it requires some skill in making an attractive page; so, too, is the making up of a page of newspaper or other periodical. Men usually do these things, although women occasionally learn the art by watching men at their tasks and asking to be allowed to help at some opportune moment.

It will be seen from our account that the chief field of competition between men and women in the printing trade is in setting up straight matter. The women compare well with the men in accuracy of work, but can not ordinarily do so much as their male competitors in the same time. The Secretary of the Typographical Union says that all employers are agreed that women can not compete with men where the same wages are paid. This statement was corroborated by several Boston master printers, who declared that if they had to pay the same time wages to women they would turn all the girls off, because they could not earn the \$17 and \$18 per week which was the Union rate. One large employer's wage schedule for women piece workers showed earnings from \$10 to \$14 for type setters upon full time. Since this was according to the Union piece scale, it went to justify the statement as to the smaller amount of work done by the women. A Union official states that in non-union offices in Boston women are employed at from \$8 to \$12 per week on a time scale. Women are employed upon the linotype in small numbers on Boston afternoon papers, where a Union time scale is paid, but there are few in other cities. That they are employed at all shows that some women can earn the scale and equal men in quantity, as well as quality, of work;



that they are employed in very small numbers—less than a dozen—is a matter for reflection. Is it because only a few choice women can compete on equal terms with men, or must the prejudice of the employer or of brother workmen be considered? That the women employed are above the average in ability is denied by the employers, as is also the existence of prejudice on their own part. They said they did not care whether women or men were in the offices, and attribute the scarcity of women to the attitude of the Union, a matter which we will take up when considering Union policy regarding women's work. In one fine book establishment a number of women were found at work upon the linotype machine and were said to be as efficient as the men and were paid the same wages. Women are employed as proof readers, moreover, in Union book and newspaper offices, on the same time scale with men, but in non-union offices they get less. In the oldest printing establishment in the country, where the highest class work is done, the employer explained the difference by the fact that the men were better educated, some of them even being college graduates. In the three kinds of work mentioned above women hold their own in the more difficult tasks, proof reading and linotype operating. Many parts of the trade are not suited to women's strength, but the more complicated kinds of type-setting, advertising, bill heads, etc., seem to be a field where women might prove efficient. Why she does not learn this more difficult work is a question answered in different ways. She doesn't care to work hard for a larger salary, declares a prominent Union official; an employer, a leading member of the Typothetæ, when asked if a woman would be given a chance to learn the more difficult and better paid processes, answers frankly, no; for the employer does not wish to have his workmen hindered with helping along girls who stay only a short time in his service. This gentleman, a person apparently without any prejudice on this subject, insisted upon the importance of the temporary character of women's labor as an influence keeping them from rising to the

best classes of work. He admitted that a few women stayed on ten or more years, but a large proportion of his men had been with him for over that period. None of the women left for work in other houses; most of them were getting married; some went home to take care of parents or orphaned brothers and sisters; but matrimony was regarded as the main cause of women's position in the trade. Another large Boston employer thought that women were no more transient than men, but admitted that the majority of type-setters, both men and women, were not likely to remain long in one place. He explained his preference for girls by saying that they were more contented and of much higher character than the men.

The place of women in the International Typographical Union is of particular interest, for there is a greater degree of competition between the sexes in the printing than in most other trades. The constitution directs locals to organize all women within their jurisdiction as soon as possible, and place them upon the same basis with men as to wages, dues, and benefits. In 1902 the general convention made provision for the establishment of separate locals for women, but at the present time no such Unions exist. The results of the policy of an identical scale are difficult to decide. Employers say that insistence upon a uniform time scale for men and women is simply a means of putting women out of the trade. The head of a large Boston printing house is responsible for the statement that the printed reports of conferences between the representatives of the Typothetæ, on the one hand, and of the Union, on the other, contain the declaration of the Union officers that the Union policy was to force women out of the trade by insisting upon the same scale for them as for men compositors. Boston is the one place where women's competition is a most serious matter; they have been employed in the city and suburbs in large numbers from an early date, and are organized to a very small extent. The secretary of the Boston local estimated that there were 500 to 600 women type-setters in Boston, Norwood,



and Cambridge in the book and job trade, and 600 to 800 men; of these women a small per cent is in the Union. The trade as a whole is less well organized in Boston than in other large cities, and the questions arise whether the small success of organization and the extensive employment of women are related as cause and effect and, if so, which condition is prior to the other. Master printers say that women are employed because the Union is not strong enough to enforce its uniform scale. Unionists explain their comparative lack of strength in this locality by the fact that women have so long been employed here, and that they are very difficult to organize. The impartial observer finds several conditions that go toward explaining their employment in such large numbers. In the first place, the preponderance of the book trade, with its demand for type-setters on "straight matter," which is the work women usually do, would make their employment a natural thing, if men were scarce or unruly. Besides, the example of the early employment of women in the textile factories, the spirit of New England thrift and independence, and the general high degree of intelligence and education among all classes must be considered as reasons for the introduction of women into the Boston printing offices. In New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago their presence in the trade is of no significance. A New York Union official considered women inferior in ability and explained their presence even in small numbers by saying that it had become the custom to have a few women in some offices. In Chicago, the nature of the trade is said to preclude the extensive employment of women; since newspapers, trade journals, job work, and an enormous amount of catalog printing constitute the greater part of the business; most of this is rush work, is made up of other than straight type-setting, and is paid by the time scale, all of which make it unsuited to women.

Printing is one of the trades in which direct competition between the sexes has led to some hard feeling. On the one hand, the local officials complain that they can "do nothing with the women", that they have failed after repeated efforts

to enlist their sympathy and interest; and they seem disgusted with the frivolity of the sex. On the other hand, capable and intelligent Union women insist that the organization does not want them, and favors men, wherever possible, by giving them places and advancing them at the expense of women competitors. This action is possible because the foreman in all Union offices has the right to discharge for incompetency and to select the best workmen according to the Union scale, and can of course discriminate against women employees, if the feeling in the shop is with him. Instances were cited of foremen's refusing to consider the claims of women who were of unquestionable ability; men would boast that when they got to be foremen they would turn out all the women, but when it came to carrying out this threat they were not always ready to deprive themselves of some of their best workpeople. One instance of very flagrant neglect on the part of Union officials to make the most of an opportunity to explain Union principles to a large number of women who were interested in the movement gave considerable weight to other accusations. The exact condition would probably be difficult for an outsider to determine, but from the attitude of both men and women it seems probable that the men have tried to bring women into the organization, and have failed, and that they have given up the matter with rather bitter feelings toward female competitors both inside and outside the Union. Yet there is often good fellowship between the men and women members of the local, and the man most discontented with the progress of the women spoke with great respect of some who were capable and dignified. A much larger percentage of the men in the craft than of the women are enrolled in the Union, and all Union representatives agree that women are much harder to organize than men. An explanation for this lack of interest is given by the general secretary as follows: "A large percentage of women who work, are merely doing so until they find the man of their choice, and become the head of a household. They do not expect to work at it for a life time; consequently there is no use of their joining the Union.



Again, proprietors, as above stated, claim that they can not pay men and women the same wages for the reason that women can not perform the same amount of work as do men. Women therefore decline to join the Union, fearing displacement by men in case they do so." The question at once arises: Why does the Union insist on an identical scale? Would it not be a measure of justice which women would recognize, to establish a differential?

Once within the Union women seem, for some reasons, to lack interest in its activities; in the small towns it sometimes happens that they are of considerable influence, and act as officers, but in the cities they hold no official positions, and do not largely attend meetings. In the general organization they are not represented among the officers and organizers, and are only occasionally sent as delegates to conventions. When asked as to their having any influence on the Union policy, the very non-committal answer was given by a general official, that they had their votes as did the men. This, with other evidence, justifies one in inferring that they are not a factor in the policy or politics of the organization. The failure of women Unionists to attend local meetings is worth noting here, because it brings up certain features of the mixed local that are of significance. The policy of organizing according to the department of work results, in many trades, in practically separating men from women; the Typographical Union thinks it best to have all printers in a city as members of a single local, and the provision for separate locals for women has never been taken advantage of; hence we have in the cities very large bodies which are overwhelmingly masculine. If women came to meetings in the same proportion as men, they would still form a small group in a large roomful of men; they would have little influence; and would find the atmosphere little to their taste, for it is likely to be black with tobacco smoke. Like other politicians, the men wrangle and draw out the discussions to unconscionable length, and the women, taking little part in the discussion, naturally become tired and depart in disgust. Another reason for non-

attendance at meetings is the fact that these are often held on Sunday afternoons, the only time which working women have for visiting and recreation; for they can not go out as freely in the evening as men. These considerations may seem trivial, but, in reality, they are suggestive of fundamental difficulties in mixed organizations. It is certain that women are most unlikely to speak freely, and take an active and unembarrassed part in gatherings where men are in the majority, and that men do feel themselves abused and imposed upon, if obliged, out of respect to women, to give up the privilege of smoking at regular meetings.

The Women's Auxiliary of the Typographical Union is composed of the women belonging to the families of the Union printers and is organized with "locals" and "international" corresponding to those of the Union. The objects of the society are the social enjoyment of its members and the furthering of labor interests. The locals insist upon the use of label goods, agitate for improvement in child labor laws, look after the sick of the society, and increase the good fellowship among the families of the locals by social gatherings.

### 3. THE INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF BOOKBINDERS

Like type setting, book binding is a trade which men acquire thoroughly by means of a four years' apprenticeship; while girls learn one process in a few weeks, become full fledged workers, and possibly remain at that task for a long time. In large offices raw girls are taken in for folding, the simplest work, and from these the foreman selects the most fit for the higher grades; in offices in smaller towns a girl has a chance of learning all the women's tasks, and a year or more is required for completing them. With the exception of folding, the different kinds of work are of about the same difficulty, and since a girl earns more at the task at which she is proficient than at a new one, she remains at that task by preference, unless intermittent work shifts her from one to another kind of labor. The absence of competition between the sexes in this trade gives an inter-



esting opportunity of studying a division of labor based upon the nature of the tasks themselves, rather than upon custom, prejudice, or the policy of the Union. Men do the tasks which require strength—not necessarily in the process itself but in auxiliary labor—such as handling heavy piles of paper or books; they also do most of the work upon the machines, for these require both strength and some knowledge of machinery, such as ability to discover and remedy minor difficulties; women and girls in the trade have to do with the machines proper in only two processes,—folding and sewing, and work usually with a tool upon a simple task that requires often considerable dexterity and constant attention.

According to the opinion of Union officers and employers, the girls in the trade are mostly of American birth, and of all ages between fourteen and sixty, though most of them are young. In one large shop of high standing it was said that three fourths were in the shop five years before. The employment of the women is threatened by several new machines that are on the market, but have not been perfected; the folding machine is not new, but is becoming more satisfactory all the time; and with it a man and four girls do the work that eight or ten girls did with the simpler machines or by hand. Gathering and pasting machines are not in general use because their work is not quite true, but they too are in a way to be perfected soon. Their use will mean the displacement of a number of girls in every shop large enough to make the introduction of the machines profitable. Girl folders in the neighborhood of Boston get \$4.40 a week; the most skilled workers make \$12 to \$14. Occasionally a girl makes \$18. The general secretary of the Union writes that there is a stream of girls passing through the trade, remaining a few years and then marrying or going to something else, but that when a girl once becomes proficient she is likely to remain in the trade some time.

Corresponding with the difference between the positions of men and women in the industry, the requirements of the Union for the two classes are different: men must have served their

four years apprenticeship, while employment at any branch of the trade makes women eligible. In like manner dues and benefits differ; men pay 25 cents, and women 17 cents to the international; strike benefits per week are \$5 to an unmarried man, \$7 to a married man, and \$4 to a woman; funeral benefits are \$50 for all classes. Added to these are local dues, bringing the total payment to 25 or 30 cents per month; one society has a 75 cent tax, and gives a sick benefit, which few locals provide for. Women are organized into mixed locals and those composed wholly of women. Of twenty women's locals reported, all but one had women secretaries. The third vice president is a woman, and when asked what influence women had upon the policy of the Union, the general secretary replied that they had their proportion of delegates, but no report of their activity was given. Much stress is laid by a number of local secretaries upon the importance of the label. In bookbinding we have a trade in which general conditions are favorable for the organization of women workers; their tasks being complementary to those of men, no feeling of jealousy between them exists, and the men have every motive to foster the growth of the women's locals. Fair wages, comfortable shops, and work that is not particularly disagreeable attract to the better establishments girls of fair intelligence, a characteristic most advantageous to the growth of Unionism among any set of people. The bindery girls are also of American birth largely and hence are free from the hindrance of differences of language and of race prejudice. It may be noted here that one of the most influential women Unionists in the country belongs to the bookbinder's craft. As explained in the consideration of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, the existence of a large number of label shops makes it difficult to estimate the interest of the women by their numbers; but in this case there is a larger proportion of women than in the shoe factories and they thus have a greater influence in determining whether the shops shall be unionized. Upon the whole their position is much like that of the Boot and Shoe Workers, though wages are not as



good; many of the locals seem to be in a healthy condition, and no general cause of difficulty or discord exists; but with a few exceptions women have little influence upon the general policy of the organization, and they are found to give up their allegiance more easily than men and to neglect meetings of their locals.

#### 4. THE UNITED GARMENT WORKERS

The United Garment Workers Union includes men and women engaged in the manufacture of ready-made and special-order clothing. Custom tailors have a separate organization, as did also the special order workers until 1903. The trade included in 1900, 120,950 wage earners, of whom 69,862 or 57.8 per cent were women.<sup>1</sup> The preeminence of New York as a centre of the trade is due to the constant and enormous inflow of foreigners who on account of their low standard of living and general helplessness constitute a very cheap instrument of production. Chicago, the second city in importance, for like reason is the seat of a large industry; both places, of course, possess the general commercial advantages of a metropolis. The product of the trade includes (1) men's and boy's pants, vests, and coats, (2) overalls and other workingmen's garments, and (3) special order clothing—suits made to measure but without fitting and usually according to factory methods. The general conditions of work and division of labor are different in the production of these various classes of goods and shops are usually specialized for the making of coats, pants and vests.

The organization of labor in the clothing manufacture is varied; but the feature best known to the public is the system of sub-contract practiced by many of the so-called manufacturers, who take the risk of profit or loss, buy the cloth, and sell the finished garment. In the manufacturers' own rooms these garments are cut by skilled workmen and are then finished in one of the following ways: they are given out to contractors, who (a) finish them in their own shops, or (b) divide them up

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Manufactures 3: 267.

among sub-contractors, or (c) parcel them out to individuals. Sometimes the manufacturer may have them finished upon his own premises, by workmen hired directly by him. The owner of the goods is called the manufacturer, although it is only in the last mentioned case that he produces according to factory methods; he is, however, the one person in the business who has capital, for the contractor and sub-contractor are usually immigrants of a few year's residence, possessing little means. They employ still later arrivals from European countries to work long hours at very low wages and in unsanitary surroundings. The distressing details of their hopeless condition have been brought to the attention of the public by various investigators and have roused sympathy for the victims of this so-called "sweating system". That the extreme poverty and helplessness of sweated laborers were the result of the sub-contract method of production, and that sub-contract work was the essential element of sweating, was generally believed until the British investigation<sup>1</sup> proved that the evils of low wages and long hours were also present where there was direct employment of laborers and that they were always to be found wherever there are congregated large numbers of persons who are industrially helpless, whether from lack of training, physical strength, mental alertness or familiarity with surroundings. In the great clothing centers of New York and Chicago the "system" is made possible by the congestion of an enormous foreign population, little skilled in American methods of work and unacquainted with the language and industrial conditions of the country. That the trade is largely in the hands of the Jews is easily explained by their race traits and economic situation. Owing to the governmental or customary restrictions under which they have lived for centuries in other lands, they are unfitted for many of the more remunerative lines of employment. They have great industry and endurance and are ready to kill themselves with hard work in order to raise their children to a higher plane of living; and because of their over-developed commer-

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Willett, *Women in the Clothing Trades*, 33.



cial sense they are attracted to any trade that gives them the chance of rising easily to the place of employer and of thus bargaining and making their income in the form of profit. The contract system of the clothing trade presents this opportunity and its miserable conditions do not deter men inured to hardships of all kinds. The large number of this race in the trade have prevented a more extensive employment of women, in the first place, because the constant inflow of Jewish immigrants with their readiness to accept small wages and work long hours destroys the usual advantage of female labor; and in the second place because it is against Hebrew tradition for women to continue other than home work after marriage. With the German tailors the custom is quite different; in New York there are many of this nation working with wife and children and one or two outsiders as assistants, in what may be called family shops.<sup>1</sup> Besides these two, there are various other nations represented in the industry; in the special order trade which is centered in Chicago the majority of workers are Swedes, and in both New York and Chicago large numbers of Italian women finish off garments. Among the cutters there are Irish, English, Germans, and Swedes.

The giving out of work to people living in very crowded and filthy parts of the great cities signified of course a production under most unsanitary conditions and worst of all the evils was the danger of contagion arising from making garments in the living room of the tailor where filth and disease were often present. These shops have now been partially done away with as a result of restrictive legislation. Garments are still finished by Italian women in their own living rooms, but registration and an inadequate inspection have done something to reduce the danger of contagious disease from this source. Family shops and those employing a very small number of helpers still form 23.2 per cent of the total number of shops, the other extreme in size is represented by the 1.2 per cent of factories with more than 250 wage earners; shops employing

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Willett, *Women in the Clothing Trade*, 33.

from 5 to 20 persons constitute 47.2 per cent of the whole, and those employing from 21 to 50 are 19.9 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The most peculiar organization of labor is found in the "task" coat shops of the New York Jews; according to this plan the garment is made by a "team" consisting of three men, an operator, a baster and a finisher; these are usually supplemented by a presser and a girl for sewing on buttons, who work for two or three teams. This division of labor is very effective, especially when one swift workman—probably the master of the shop—sets the pace.

The largest part of the product is made in what may be called transition shops; they are of moderate size, with from fifteen to fifty employes, and differ from the task shop in not having the work divided up among teams and in paying wages by the week rather than by the task. They differ from the factory in their smaller size and in the fact that the garments are not owned by the master or cut on the premises. The factory system is characterized by a minute division of labor among a large number of employees, who are hired by the firm that owns and cuts the garment. The economy of this organization consists in the possibility of using a large amount of unskilled, in connection with a small amount of skilled labor and in the usual advantages of division of work. The breaking up of processes is here carried to the extent that a hundred persons may be employed in making one coat. The factories are likely to be in better condition than the smaller shops, for they are more easily inspected, and regulations as to the legal working day are more closely observed, because there is more time work and laborers have no incentive to labor over hours. The work is so minutely divided and hence requires so little skill that any workman, or set of workmen, can be easily replaced in a city with a large and helpless immigrant population. This fact and the ever present alternative of giving work to the "outsiders" tend to keep wages down and prevent the growth of Unions among factory workers.

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Twelfth Census Manufactures, 3: 267.



The most skilled and important part of the trade, the cutting, is always in the hands of men, who also do a large part of the pressing, which requires considerable strength. Women perform such minor processes as felling, sewing on buttons, tacking, making pads and pulling out bastings. They also make buttonholes and do certain kind of basting. Both men and women operate machines. In general, the Germans make greater use of women's work than the Jews, who are largely responsible for the restriction of women's work in New York. The employment of women is not materially influenced by the different systems of production or by the use of mechanical motive power. In the large overall factories with the exception of the cutters practically all the employees are women. Much of the finishing of men's garments is done at very low rates by the Italian women home workers both in New York and Chicago. In some factories a large number of girls are taught button hole making free in order that from among them some skilled workers may be chosen for the fine work on men's coats. The superintendent of a large factory having characterized women's work as routine and unskilled admitted that here, as in other trades, sensitiveness of touch made them superior in a few processes.

In 1902 the Garment Workers' Union was composed of 179 local bodies, of which 83 were made up of men only and 96 of women, or both men and women.<sup>1</sup> In the winter of 1903-04 the policy of organizing women separately was given up. As regards financial benefits women are practically upon the same basis as men. No women delegates were sent to the first two conventions but since 1895 they have constituted an increasing percentage of the whole. This indicates considerable interest on the part of the women's Unions, for all delegates are sent at the expense of the local body. In the mixed Unions there is a slight tendency to send a disproportionally large number of men. Until 1899 the women delegates served only in a general way; since then they have usually had one out of the seven places

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<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Willett, *Women in the Clothing Trade*, Chapter on the Trade Union.

on the Executive Board. At the present time two women are members of the Board.

Women have had little influence in the determination of the general policy of the Union; in the conventions they rarely take part in discussions of questions of broad interest or in particular cases except where they are immediately concerned. As expert witnesses on special conditions they speak to the point, and they perform valuable supplementary work and have contributed to the orderly character of the meetings. The vitality of the women's locals has been carefully studied by Mrs. Willett with the following conclusions: The very weak Unions that lived less than two years were those whose formation had been due to the label's being forced upon a small number of women by the manufacturer or by tailors, anxious to extract concessions from an unwilling employer. But it is also found that a good proportion of the successful Unions have been formed under the influence of the label; so it would seem that the label must be strengthened by other conditions, especially by the presence of a strong body of Unionists in the community and by some intelligence on the part of workers. The custom of the Jewish women of giving up work after marriage has made the efforts to organize them wholly ineffectual. Unlike most of the Unions considered in the present study the social functions of the women's locals in the United Garment Workers seem to be the most important force in maintaining interest in the organization and are especially prominent in small towns. The various "benefits" of most Unions appeal less to women than to men, and when there is no strike excitement and no immediate rise of wages in sight it is very hard to hold the women together, and to make them attend meetings and pay their dues. It is then that the social attraction is introduced to prevent the falling away of the indifferent. The importance of this side of Union activities is forcibly expressed by Mrs. Willett as follows: "Unless through practical compulsion from without I doubt whether any woman's Union has maintained itself with a large membership for a considerable number of years



without the aid of dances, card parties and social gatherings of other kinds. The greater ease with which social bonds are developed in the small towns and cities accounts largely for the greater activity of the Unions located in small places." The Union has done excellent service as a school in which knowledge of prevailing conditions of the trade is gained, and a clearness of judgment and a sense of responsibility and fair-mindedness are developed.

##### 5. THE LADIES' GARMENT WORKERS' UNION

Like the United Garment Workers, this Union undertakes the very difficult task of organizing a body of wage earners composed largely of unskilled foreigners, whose numbers are increased every year by immigration. Its jurisdiction covers the workers on women's garments, while the United Garment Workers' Union is made up of persons employed on men's outer garments. New York is the center of the women's as well as the men's clothing trade. Before 1880 the trade in women's ready made clothing was confined almost entirely to cloaks; in the eighties suits were added, and in the nineties lingerie; shirt waists have become an item of importance in the manufacture, but owing to changes in fashion this part of the trade is again on the wane. In these shops, as in those for men's clothing, usually only one kind of garment is made, and the proportion of skilled and unskilled labor, wages and other conditions vary considerably with the nature of the product. The chief classes of garments are cloaks, suits, skirts, waists, shirt-waists, wrappers and underwear. Cloaks require the largest proportion of skilled labor and in cloak shops is found the largest number of men, including some Jewish and Italian finishers; they employ from eight to fifteen workers.<sup>1</sup> There is a tendency for the small contractors to increase in number because the insignificant amount of necessary capital can be borrowed by giving a mortgage on finished goods and the contractor has an advantage over the large manufacturers in not

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Manufactures 3: 29.

paying expensive designers and cutters; he copies designs and does his own cutting. In spite of the skill required on these garments, which must show the precision in cut and finish found on men's coats, together with variety in design and elaborateness of detail, the work is being divided up so that unskilled immigrants and especially women are increasingly employed and at lower prices than have prevailed. They are enabled to do the work that formerly required considerable experience by a more minute division of labor and the use of new additions to the sewing machine, which cost little and render a simple movement or adjustment as effective as a dexterous manipulation of the cloth by an experienced hand. Wages in the cloak shops are usually paid by the piece, or occasionally by the hour, but the task system of the coat manufacture has no place here. The skirt and waist constituting a woman's suit are frequently made in different places. Skirts are made in shops similar to those for cloaks. Electric or steam power prevails in Boston, while many foot machines are found in New York. The skirt trade is suffering severely from the declining use of separate waists and skirts.

"Last year<sup>1</sup> men constituted 75 per cent of the employees in the skirt shops; this spring they have fallen to 60 and by fall it will be 50 per cent only": such was the estimate of an intelligent Union organizer. There is a larger proportion of women than in the cloak shops; here they baste, do some operating, and finish. Most of the workers are Jewish, but there are a good many American operators. The shirt waist industry has developed rapidly in the last few years, big shops growing out of small ones on every hand, but it is believed that a change in fashion is about to cause a rapid decline in the demand for these garments. Shops run from fifteen to one hundred or more employees. Men do the cutting of waists but the remainder of the workers are usually women, who easily learn the tasks; for the operating or sewing up of the waist is divided up into a number of small parts. Work is more regular here

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<sup>1</sup> 1903.



than in some other branches of the trade, the girls finding something to do during the greater part of the year. They average about \$5.00 per week but get as much as \$9.00 or \$10.00 for a short time in the better shops. Improvement of conditions is said to be hampered by the competition of the Italians, and in many places wages are very low.

The wrapper trade differs from the others here mentioned; the garments are made in larger shops and wages are perhaps \$1.00 per week less than for similar work in waist making. This is explained by the fact that the quality of the work is not as important as in other garments, so that cheap unskilled labor is used and factories have been established in the country towns where labor is cheaper than in the city. In Gloucester three or four hundred girls are employed in one shop, which has its office and part of its cutting rooms in Boston. This is possible because little careful supervision or attention to details is required for the rough work on these garments, and the result is that the possibility of the country factory serves as a threat to keep down city wages. After the cutting the work is done by Jewish or Italian girls. There are no Union wrapper shops. Conditions in the white goods factories vary greatly and the Union has done little with them thus far. The workers upon women's garments of all kinds suffer from most of the ills that are found in the men's clothing industry, chief among which is the presence of a large and constantly increasing immigrant population, who easily acquire the skill necessary for most of the processes of the trade. In the ladies' clothing business there is the additional evil of a demand peculiarly sensitive to changes of fashion and to the prosperity of the times. A change in the general character of the garment, as the decline in the use of separate waists and skirts, is likely to mean a temporary falling off in the demand for labor in the ready made trade, for a new style of garment is likely to be made at first by custom tailors or dressmakers or by the individual wearing them. Constant changes in cut and manner of trimming is another unfortunate circumstance for the worker, for they necessitate read-

justments of wage scales which are likely to give the better informed employer an opportunity of reducing earnings by some manipulation of rates.

After considering the conditions of the trade, it is not to be wondered at that a labor organization in it has been attempted only in the last few years and that its label as yet represents a hope rather than an achievement.<sup>1</sup> At present it is estimated that one-eighth of the workers are organized. In the spring of 1900 the cloakmakers of New York, who had had a Union for a number of years, issued a call for a convention to those organizations throughout the country representing the makers of ladies' garments. The convention met in June, and New York, Baltimore and Philadelphia responded to the call; officers were elected and a label was adopted. In the first year there were thirty-nine local strikes, thirty-three of which were won; there were twenty-six compromises effected without a strike and wages of Union employees were increased twenty-five per cent. During 1901-'02 there were 150 strikes of which 125 were won and eighteen lost, wages were raised and conditions improved.<sup>2</sup> The year 1903-'04 was marked with incessant troubles with employers, not only by strikes but by a phenomenal number of lockouts, which were inspired by a determined opposition to the Union and occasioned by the employers' advantage of a dull market. Nearly all locals have suffered from efforts of the masters to disrupt them.<sup>3</sup> A lengthy struggle between six hundred corset workers in the West and their employers was notable because of the support received from outsiders and of the low wages and petty tyranny which it revealed. The Union had gained a nine hour day, a fixed repair schedule and an increase of ten per cent in wages, but after a year the firm reduced wages to the old standard and demanded individual contracts. Many of the girls have persisted in their refusal to go back under these conditions and the firm claims to be able to do without

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<sup>1</sup> Philip Davis, Organizer, in the *Federationist*, Jan. 1904.

<sup>2</sup> *Federationist* 9:610, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> President's Report, 1903-'04.



them. It is evident that the Ladies' Garment Workers will have to encounter a militant opposition from the manufacturers, who partake of the general reactionary feeling against Trade Unions and find encouragement in the youth and weakness of this organization and in the condition of the labor market.

In the organization of this Union there are one or two somewhat noticeable features; the constitution provides that in case a strike voted for by a local Union is disapproved by the general Executive Board, the local has the right to appeal through the Secretary-Treasurer to a vote of the general membership. If their action is sanctioned by a two-thirds vote, the Executive Board must sustain the strike. This is a democratic arrangement and tends to reduce the power of the officers. Another decentralizing provision of the constitution is that the per capita tax to be paid into the general treasury shall, after being voted by the convention, be referred to the locals and decided by a majority of votes cast; all other questions of finance are decided by the locals. The result of this policy is seen in the complaint of the Secretary-Treasurer that many strikes are lost because no financial aid can be given them and that the funds are entirely inadequate for the needs of the organization.<sup>1</sup> At the convention in Boston in June, 1904, by advice of the President, the constitution was amended so as to permit the discussion of socialism. What will be the result of this radical action upon the management of Union affairs cannot be foretold. To an observer it seems to signify the despair of men hopeless of ameliorating by Union methods the hard condition of their trade.

As in most other Unions, so in the Ladies' Garment Workers, women have the same rights as men; but they have had in fact little influence upon the policy of the organization. They number about fifteen hundred, more than half of the workers in the trade, but only one-sixth of the members of the Union. They officer their own locals and two women were sent

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<sup>1</sup> Report 1903-'04.

as delegates to the convention of 1903 but they are not represented on the general Executive Board or among the general officials. In certain cases the women in the trade have shown considerable endurance and independence, as the corset workers of Aurora and the wrapper makers of Boston, who upon their own initiative formed a vigorous local in spite of considerable opposition from employers. In New York and other great centers the girls in the trade are largely Jewish, but there are some American born operators and Italian finishers. In some instances the American girls are said to be less willing to join the Union than the Jewish, owing to their dislike of being recognized as wage workers, and the officers express great discouragement on the subject of rousing the interest of the women. One intelligent organizer gives as the two great weaknesses of the Union, the facts that so large a part of the workers consists of "an element most difficult to deal with, as women admissably are", and that the label has a "clientage" of women, who constitute "a class which is even more backward in the keen perception of their duties as consumers than in their rights as producers". Only a small proportion of women wage earners are in the Unions and these are not always zealous in their efforts to purchase Union made goods; the families of Union men likewise fail to express their preference for label goods.

This Union more than any other looks to the women's label organization for aid in educating women as consumers; it has opposed the work of the Consumers' League, because that society does not consider fair wages as one of the conditions upon which it grants its label; an agreement has been made between the two organizations, according to which the League restricts its label to white goods, but its whole activity is considered by the Union officers as a menace to their work. In view of the nature of the product and the characteristics of the consumers it seems doubtful whether a label policy can be made effective by the workers on women's garments; strictly enforced laws regarding "sweat shop" methods of production and the



immigration of foreigners seem to be the only means by which a flourishing Union can be made possible.

## 6. THE UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS

The large number of women workers in the textile factories, the early date of their employment, and the great success of British Unions in this trade lead one to expect an interesting Union movement among American cotton and woolen operatives. The facts, however, do not sustain the inference. Until very recently the textile Unions have included only the few skilled workmen, and the present comprehensive organization is very new and weak. This late and unsatisfactory development is to be explained by peculiar conditions in the trade. The manufacture of woolen and cotton goods is uncertain in its profits and its demand for labor because of its direct dependence upon agriculture for raw materials. The woolen trade has the added disadvantage of an inadequate domestic supply, combined with the vagaries of an unstable tariff; moreover, it is especially subject to the whims of fashion which may necessitate sudden and expensive changes in machinery which will wipe out profits and the chance for advanced wages. The cotton industry is fortunate in its nearness to the world's cotton fields, but so uncertain are the weather and other conditions determining the size of the crop, that the value of cotton has become the subject of a most elaborate system of calculation, of much uninformed guessing, and of underhand manipulation. So keen is competition and so close is calculation of cost, that an entire year's profits may depend upon the foresight of a manufacturer in buying at a favorable turn of the market, and the cleverest management finds it hard to produce at a profit when there is so great a shortage in the cotton crop and such high prices as ruled during 1903. Both profits and wages suffer from a season of high priced cotton, for competition is so severe that it is difficult to raise the price of the finished product to correspond with the increased cost of raw material. More permanent and disastrous for the welfare of New England cot-

ton operatives than a season's high priced raw material, however, is the competition of the Southern mills, which within the last fifteen years has become a real menace to the cotton manufacture of the North; for not only have the Southern mills the advantage of nearness to the cotton fields, but they also pay much lower wages owing to the low standard of living and the unorganized condition of the employees. Demands for higher wages by the Northern operatives are likely to be met by the stock reply that the low current prices of finished product allow only a minimum return or none at all to capital; and the fact that this is frequently true makes it a plausible response for all times. Not only does the cotton trade suffer from unstable prices of raw material and severe competition but it is also peculiarly sensitive to the depressing effects of hard times; for, while cotton cloth is a necessity of civilized life, our extravagant American consumption may be considerably reduced for a season or two without real inconvenience and smaller incomes result in lessened expenditure for such things. These hard conditions for the manufacturer have resulted in a very low marginal demand for the textile operative which has attracted to the industry only those wage earners, who from lack of strength or training or knowledge of the language and customs of the country, are for the time at least incapable of making their way in more exacting and remunerative lines of employment. Exceptions are found, of course, in the responsible and highly skilled workmen whose exceptional ability must be paid for here as elsewhere.

Cloth making is one of the few great industries in which both men and women have been engaged in something like equal proportions from very early times. At present there is a decided increase in the proportion of men in the textiles as a whole, and especially in the cotton trade. In the twenty years from 1880 to 1900 the ratio of men increased from 34.4 to 44.8 per cent, and that of women decreased from 48.4 to 41.9 per cent. The explanation of this change is to be found chiefly in nature of the new machinery. In several of the textile proces-



ses there is direct competition between men and women. In the carding room, where little skill is required, both men and women are found. Ring spinning is done by women and mule spinning by the men. The mule spinning is more skilled work and involves constant walking and handling of the machinery. Work in the slashing room is done by men, because it is heavy, is carried on in a steam saturated atmosphere, and requires the handling of hot starch; girls do spooling, or getting the thread ready for the slasher. Weaving is done by both men and girls, and it is here that the most direct competition takes place. Loom fixers, who are skilled mechanics are men. In quality of work, women equal men: but they usually tend a smaller number of looms, although some unusually strong women can average as much as the best workmen. The large number of workmen in the textile mills are paid by the piece and men's earnings ordinarily amount to more than women's.<sup>1</sup>

Unions of certain classes of textile workers, like the Mule Spinners and Loom Fixers, are not new, but these as a rule have been composed of skilled workmen and have not touched women workers. In 1891, a Union was formed which was meant to include all workers in textile mills except the cotton mule spinners, who already have a charter from the American Federation of Labor. The policy of this new organization was unfortunate and it soon came in conflict with the Federation, whose officers threatened to organize the textile workers into a new Union if the existing society did not refrain from political agitation. As a result new officers, approved by the Federation, were elected in 1897; and in 1899 measures were taken looking to a new organization which would include the existing textile Unions, formed of workers in various processes, such as the carders, mule spinners and slashers. As late as the convention of 1903 the silk workers declined to enter the Union and insisted upon having a separate charter from the Federation of Labor. This was refused upon the policy of forming only one national Union within a trade. In 1901, the organization was

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Employees and Wages, XXXIV.

completed and embraced all textile workers except the mule spinners, who had a strong society with prior rights of recognition by the Federation of Labor.

The proportion of women in the Union seems to be about the same as in the trade. The president estimates that forty to fifty per cent of the 14,000 members are women, yet it is said to be difficult to get women interested. One very evident explanation of this indifference is the presence of large numbers of very young girls who are roused only by the prospect of a picnic or a dance. The age of the majority of female workers is said to be between fourteen and twenty-four. The girls in the Union are usually there through the influence of father and mother. Organizers have amusing experiences when, after attracting young women to a Union meeting by means of a dancing program, they attempt to inculcate Union doctrines and find their young auditors bored with the speeches sitting with eyes turned longingly to the waiting musicians. The national executive council of twelve includes one woman but there is no other female officer. Of the sixty-nine delegates at the convention in 1903 five were women; on the ten committees, of three persons each, were two women. The local organizations are usually mixed bodies. It is said by those in authority that women do not come to meetings regularly, nor in as large proportion as the men do, but any question of interest will bring them out. They are more faithful in time of strikes, aid in collecting money and in other ways, but ordinarily cannot be said to take an active part in Union affairs; although here, as elsewhere, representatives testify that there are some excellent women Unionists. The predominance of young girls and the expectation of marriage are given as reasons for lack of interest.

#### 7. THE GLOVE WORKERS' UNION

The glove trade and its workers are of economic interest on several accounts; it is a trade that, from the character of the work involved, is peculiarly suited to old countries, and is transplanted to our Machine governed land only in a modified



form, and with a different organization of labor ; it is localized in a peculiar and picturesque way in small towns, and a large part of the work is done by women in their homes. The industry originated before the middle of the century and has grown steadily, but at an accelerated rate, in the last decade, when the establishments increased from 324 to 394, the capital from \$5,977,000 to \$9,127,000, the value of the product from 10,000,000 to \$17,000,000, and the workers from 8,187 to 14,436.<sup>1</sup> A noticeable fact about this growth is that the ratio of capital to product has remained about the same, while in almost all other industries the percentage of capital has increased at the expense of labor. Thus it appears that the workmen have little to fear from the encroachment of machinery. Yet this does not mean that no improvements in mechanism are made, for on glove-sewing machines, the main element of fixed capital, there have been forty-six patents issued in the United States. The growth of the industry has been almost entirely in men's gloves, which often equal foreign makes in quality. Of sixteen million dollars worth of product twelve and four-tenths millions were men's gloves, two and four-tenths millions women's, and the rest childrens'.<sup>2</sup> This specialization is explained by the difficulty of obtaining fine skins, by the nature of the labor, and by the character of European competition. The European glove makers have inherited the dexterity of manipulation and the patience necessary for the delicate work of making women's gloves.

The localization of the industry in Fulton County, New York, is not due to any peculiarly advantageous economic conditions, but rather to a lack of hindrances, the start which the industry got, and its peculiarly gregarious character. This county, with the two glove towns, Gloversville and Johnstown, contains over half the 14,180 wage earners in the trade and sixty per cent of the capital.<sup>3</sup> The factories are controlled by

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Manufactures, 3:784, 786, 792.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 787.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 790-2.

local men who have risen from the ranks, and, since these are towns of less than 20,000, the relation between employer and employee might be expected to be rather close. Outside of this locality, Chicago, with 15,000 employees, is the largest glove making city; San Francisco and New York have between 400 and 500 each. In these cities only coarse working gloves are made.<sup>1</sup>

In the process of making gloves, men's work is quite clearly distinguished from women's; male laborers prepare the skins and cut the gloves, and in case of heavy work do the stitching; the other operations are mostly done by women. According to a recent estimate two-thirds of the employees are female.

Prices for making vary from twenty cents per dozen for the cheapest gloves to one dollar for full out-seam work. Earnings vary greatly; a general average would be about \$10. per month, although many work women make 75 cents a day.<sup>1</sup> Only the high priced work is made in factories, where not so many female operatives are employed as ten years ago. A farmer's daughter usually learns the trade on her mother's machine, in an apprenticeship of a week or two—and then buys one at \$35 for herself. The secretary of the Union estimates that at the present there are 70 per cent of the women glove makers working in the factories. They represent a great variety of nationalities—American, English, German, Italian, Swedish, French, Hebrew. A large number of women continue to work in the shop after marriage, "prompted presumably by their ambition".

The conditions which favor the growth of Trade Unionism in glove making are (1) the localization of so large a part of the trade within so small an area, and in small towns where the spread of a general sentiment would be very rapid; (2) the presence of highly skilled workmen, who are much more likely to organize than the unskilled; (3) the fact that women work after marriage; (4) the absence of any powerful capitalistic combination to dictate conditions of work. On the other hand, the

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<sup>1</sup> Twelfth Census, Manufactures, 3: 785.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 785.



fact that a large part of the women are home workers would make it difficult to get them together, and the atmosphere of a rural community is not as likely to foster discontent and desire for amelioration of conditions as that of the city. The fact is that until recently the women sewers were poorly organized, though the cutters had a Union which had been recognized by the employers for the last seven years, during which time they met with the masters annually and determined upon a schedule of prices and conditions of work. In December, 1902, a Union proposing to include all parts of the trade was founded. The preamble of the Constitution states one of the objects to be the establishment of uniform wages for the same class of work regardless of sex, but since there is little competition between girls and men this has no practical significance. The Union has started with rather inadequate provisions for aggressive work, the International dues being 10 cents a month from every member, with authority in the Executive Board to make an assessment of 10 cents per week; there are no benefits, but support is assured to all members in every difficulty which may arise between them and the employers. This rather sweeping promise is limited by the provision that "all contemplated strikes must have the consent of the General President, and and general Executive Board." A Union label is established, with the usual arrangements for contracts between employers and the Union, which provide for the "closed shop" and insure against strikes and lockouts. Ordinarily the different branches of the craft are organized separately. At present, of the thirty-nine locals, there are eight mixed and five exclusively female; three of these five are located in Gloversville. They are thus constituted not according to any provision for women's locals but upon the basis of separate societies for different parts of the craft. In a very strong Chicago women's local, a capable young girl who is president emphasized the advantages of the separate local with officers from among the members, saying that the girls speak much more freely and take a greater interest in the meetings when there are no men present.

In this local the girls were active and enthusiastic and the conditions of its success are interesting and suggestive. The Union was formed about two years ago, when the cutters in a large factory went out on a strike and were joined by the girls who objected to the charge for power which had been introduced in imitation of a custom obtaining in Gloversville, N. Y., where it was justified in a way by the fact that the women brought their own machines into the factory. Within a few days the Chicago strike was ended by the employers withdrawing the charges to which the girls objected, giving the men an increase in wages, recognizing the Union, and making a contract with it for eighteen months. At the end of this time a new contract provided another increase for the cutters and Saturday half holiday during the summer.

It is estimated by the general secretary that two fifths of the trade is organized, and that of the 2,000 members, 1800 or ninety per cent are women. As female workers constitute but 67.3 per cent of the total employees in the trade, it appears that they are more fully organized than the men. As might be expected, only a few of the home workers are in the organization. Two members of the executive board are women—the second and third vice presidents—and women delegates are sent to conventions. The secretary says that women have not been found harder to organize than men and that the purely female locals have been very successful.

#### 8. THE CIGAR MAKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION

New machinery has greatly affected the methods used in cigar making by the big factories; but because the industry is widely diffused in large numbers of small establishments, its introduction is much less general than in the manufacture of cigarettes, practically all of which are made in large factories; the serious opposition of the Union to the new methods has also retarded their rapid increase. By the use of new machinery untrained girls have been enabled to accomplish the work that skilled men formerly did by hand; at \$2.50 per thousand they



make \$7 a week whereas men formerly got \$8 to \$10 per thousand. On most processes men and women compete directly. Men excel both in quality and quantity of product but there are exceptional women whom only the best men can equal. Often husband and wife both work in a factory; the man will make perhaps \$20 a week, in a well organized city like Boston; the wife \$15. In New York a good ordinary woman may make \$12 or a very clever one \$16. A strong woman in St. Louis makes \$20 or \$25 a week. In the non-union shops young girls make \$6 or \$7. In England women have not learned the skilled hand-work to any extent.<sup>1</sup> In some cases they are not given the chance to do so, in others they do not want to learn both methods. It is considered that women's maximum is about equal to men's minimum. Not all this difference is explained by the Union scale which, is 25 per cent. less for women than for men; many of the women do not maintain the speed with which they begin, many expect to marry and do not consider their work seriously; while after marriage, if they return to work, they have an eye on the home and come late and go early. Again, the women converse at their work while the men are silent. Even at piece rates it is cheaper to have two people rather than three make a thousand cigars, and so women are advantageous to the employer only at lower wages. It has not been found that women in the United States are less likely to learn hand work because it is harder, but because it is less popular. The "Trust" employs girls on mold work almost exclusively, except at Tampa where men make hand cigars.

The Cigar Makers' Union is one of the oldest, richest and most conservative of American labor organizations, and, although it has had to contend with sweat competition it has had a fairly steady growth.

The membership of the Union is about 44,000, of whom women constitute about ten per cent. It is roughly estimated

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<sup>1</sup> Oakeshott, G. Women in the Cigar Trade, Econ. Jour. 10: 562.

that about one-fourth of those in the trades are organized. Their employment has been opposed, by the Union, because young girls would be placed at the new machines at very low wages to do the work formerly done by skilled men. This serious situation has been somewhat ameliorated by bringing women into the Union, but even now wherever women are largely employed wages are low. This is especially true in New York City, where the trade has never been thoroughly organized and rates are fifty per cent. lower than in Boston. In the tobacco region of New Jersey and Pennsylvania large numbers of women are employed, and not more than ten per cent. are organized. When the Union is strong the requirement of a three years' apprenticeship is enforced in the case of women as well as men. In New York there is a large Bohemian local to which many women belong. A large percentage of these women are married. Contrary to their custom Jewish women also remain in the trade and in the Union after marriage. The officers say that the women do this in order to retain the rights to the benefits of the organization. As a rule the women are not easily reached by the Union, although there are some who are better unionists than the men. They belong to the same locals with the men, are far outnumbered, and do not come to meetings regularly, but send their books by some man friend. They have no influence in shaping the policy of the larger locals or of the general body. In contrast with these facts, given by leading officials of the Union, is the condition of a large strippers' local in Boston, which is not under the jurisdiction of the Cigar Makers but is recognized by the Federation of Labor. It has a membership of over seven hundred girls, practically all those in the local trade; it is officered and managed entirely by women, many of whom are of Jewish parentage. The organization of the Union was occasioned by dissatisfaction felt in one or two factories over the way in which the tobacco was weighed out to the girls. It was thought that the weighers were dishonest in not giving full record for the weight actually stripped; and in order to right



this grievance the girls struck, organized a Union and demanded an arrangement by which each girl could see that proper weight was accredited to her. This reasonable demand was acceded to and, contrary to the usual experience, the organization did not die as soon as the immediate grievance was removed, but enlarged its membership to include all eligible women and established death and sick benefits. Meetings are held twice a month and outsiders are sometimes asked to talk to the girls. There is an average attendance of about one hundred—a good percentage. The success of this organization is hard to understand in view of the character of the work, which is so simple that it can be learned in two weeks. The favorable conditions are the following: The city of Boston is particularly well organized with wages fifty per cent higher than in New York; many of the girls in the business come from families in which the father and brothers are Union cigar makers; the girls have the advice and sympathy of the Cigar Makers and modeled their constitution upon that of the larger organization; they are American born and if the leaders are typical of the rank and file they are intelligent and energetic; the fact that they have their own local gives them the opportunity to develop qualities of leadership and frees them from the constraint of a masculine majority.

#### 9. THE POTTER'S UNION

The work of women in the pottery trade is not the same as that of men; according to the secretary of the Union they do decorating, finishing-off, and wareroom work. Three years ago it was estimated that there were 6,000 in the business.<sup>1</sup> As in other kinds of work, the men are skilled workmen, while the women are not. In 1901 it was estimated the national Brotherhood of Operative Potters included seventy per cent. of the trade, that five per cent. were in other organizations, and that twenty-five per cent. were not organized. The membership at present is about 8,000; perhaps ten per cent. of these are

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 14: 646.

women, while twenty-five per cent of the total employees in the trade are of this sex.<sup>1</sup> Women have been admitted to the Union only within the last three years, and this, according to the general secretary, explains the fact that they do not attend meetings or take an interest in Union affairs. They are organized into separate locals, which they officer themselves when they are sufficiently numerous. They are also sent as delegates to conventions and are eligible to official positions but have not been elected to such. The presence of women in the organization is too recent to admit of generalizations concerning their work. It is a trade in which their work is supplementary. They have responded fairly well without being influenced by necessities of the label shop, which does not exist in the trade.

#### 10. THE COMMERCIAL TELEGRAPHERS' UNION OF AMERICA

This Union was formed in July, 1903, and presents no peculiar features of organization. Women constitute twenty per cent. of the workers of the trade and hold the easier and less well paid positions, such as working at city and other light lines. They are not considered as efficient as men. They are organized in the same locals with men and are reported as coming to meetings less regularly and ordinarily taking less interest in the Union than the men do. They hold local offices and have been sent as delegates to conventions. There seems to be no question of women's underbidding male telegraphers.

#### 11. THE SHIRT, WAIST, AND LAUNDRY WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION

Laundry work is likely to involve irregular or long hours and disagreeable, if not unsanitary, conditions. The rush of the last days of the week often necessitates working into the night, making a day of twelve or fourteen hours; the heat of the ironing room, the steam and slop of the wash room, and the germs from soiled clothing, all menace the health of labor-

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Industrial Commission, 17: 183.



ers in the trade.<sup>1</sup> These evils can only be overcome by great care upon the part of the managers, and give sufficient occasion, regardless of the question of wages, for the organization of employees, and for the enactment of laws regulating the trade. In Great Britain, in 1895, laundries were brought under the provisions of the factory acts, hours were limited, and to the ordinary regulations regarding sanitation and accidents, were added provisions for minimizing heat in the ironing rooms, and other similar requirements. Some American States have laws regulating the trade, but few are at all adequate in scope or well enforced. Trade unionism likewise has failed to effect any but the most limited results in this field. It is estimated that eighty-five per cent of the employees in laundries are women. Their work is fairly distinct from that of men, but in some tasks they compete. Men are engineers, and do machine washing and wringing, and most of the hand work on shirt fronts. Other machine ironing on shirts is done by girls, as is mangle work, which may be learned in a couple of hours. Girls who have some skill tend the collar machine; there are ordinarily about one third as many girls on hand ironing as men. In shirt factories girls do all the work but cutting. On the whole, men's tasks are heavier, and in some cases, more skilled than those of the women.

The jurisdiction of the Union includes workers in shirt factories as well as laundries. In 1901 the Union claimed a membership of 7,000; at its best it constituted 20 per cent. of the total workers in the trade, but in the spring of 1904 it had fallen to seven per cent.<sup>2</sup> If the preponderance of women in the trade hinders the progress of the Union, it is not proved by any testimony obtained. In large places women have their separate locals, officered by their own members. An exception to this rule is that female hand ironers belong to a local with men of the same class. In smaller places locals are mixed. The fourth vice president of the general organization is a woman;

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<sup>1</sup> Journals of the Union, March, May, 1904, etc.

<sup>2</sup> President's Page, Official Journal, May, 1901.

female delegates are sent to conventions; and there are a few women organizers.

## 12. THE BAKERY AND CONFECTIONERY WORKERS

This Union includes journeymen working at the following branches of the trade: bread and cake, pie, cracker or pretzel baking, confectionery and pastry cooking, candy and ice cream making; also salesmen of bakery goods, bakery wagon drivers, packers and helpers in candy factories. The line between men's and women's work is not distinctly drawn; but, in general, men do the skilled and heavier tasks and receive higher wages. There are a few female bakers, but women's work is chiefly candy dipping, cracker packing, and other light tasks. Conditions in these trades have been in many places most objectionable; long hours for seven days or nights a week, in underground rooms, are the rule in many localities. Legislation has remedied some of these evils, but the Union seeks a more complete reform. In candy making young girls work for low wages under unsanitary conditions, and often acquire serious skin diseases from handling the goods. The Union has about 22,000 members, 2,000 of whom are women. They are organized both separately and in mixed locals. Dues and benefits for women are one-half those for men. No national offices are held by women, but at the last convention the candy dippers and cracker packers were represented by two delegates each. Officers say that women are more easily organized than men, but that they do not "stick", that they fall away after a short time owing to lack of interest.

## 13. THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF BUILDING EMPLOYEES

The organization generally known as the Janitors' Union has been formed so recently that little can be said of its activities. It is interesting to note that among its purposes, as stated in the preamble of the constitution, are that of encouraging a higher standard of skill among its members, and that of raising wages. The emphasis laid upon the subject of skill



is unusual. The association is composed of janitors, cleaners, inside watchmen, and elevator boys. The duties of janitors in office buildings, apartment houses, and schools differ considerably, so that in the larger towns they are organized separately. Engineers in such buildings have their own organization.

Women and men do the same kinds of work, but men have more responsible positions. In Chicago, as a part of the general Union movement, a local of office building janitresses was formed in order to limit hours of work and increase wages. The occupants of offices do not leave their rooms till six or seven in the evening, and the cleaners must then take possession and finish their work by twelve; one woman cleans a large number of rooms and hence must rush in order to finish her task. For this work eighteen cents an hour is paid, but with fifteen cents deducted for car fare and a cup of coffee to rouse lagging energy, there is left not more than 90 cents net for the six hours. Married women or widows do this work because it allows them the day at home in which to look after their families, although many of them have day work also.

The rate of eighteen cents was only gained after the Union was formed. Janitresses in Milwaukee formerly got seventy-five cents for working from half-past five to half-past nine in the morning and from half-past five to ten in the evening. The Union enforced one set of hours—from five to ten p. m.—and got an increase of two cents an hour. The Chicago Union was formed before the national association came into existence, and has done good work in interesting women in the movement. There is a membership of 500 out of a possible 2,000. One of the great difficulties is that of getting at the foreign speaking women. Many of the office cleaners are Swedes, and a Swedish organizer speaks to them in their own tongue, but Bohemians and other nationalities are more difficult to attract.

#### 14. THE AMALGAMATED MEAT CUTTERS, AND BUTCHER WORKMEN'S UNION

Women workers in the packing houses may be divided into three groups: those whose tasks are performed by women only; those who compete with men directly in work considered equally suitable for the one or the other sex; those who, within the last year or two, are making their way into fields regarded as men's domain.

The processes carried on by the first class of workers include such tasks as painting and labeling packed cases of meat products, sewing up hams in canvas bags, filling fancy boxes with chipped beef and jars with pickles and olives. All of this work is light, and is carried on in clean, quiet rooms by young American born women. In the canning department both men and women work, tending the machines that make the cases, and filling these receptacles by hand or machine. The rooms are hot and noisy, owing to the presence of machinery, and the labor is heavy and disagreeable. The workers are practically all foreigners. Quite recently Lithuanian and Polish women have been employed in the sausage department, and here small numbers are found trimming meat under necessarily disagreeable conditions, in a room full of men. Their competition is resented by the male workers as a means used by the employers to reduce wages.

Upon the suggestion of the officers of the American Federation of Labor, the representatives of a few local organizations of butchers, in the fall of 1896, formed the Meat Cutters' and Butchers' Union, and in the following January obtained a charter from the federal body.<sup>1</sup> For the next few years the Union's progress was slow, owing to general indifference and timidity, and to several specific hindrances. At the convention of 1898 there were twenty-four locals represented, and in 1904 there were nearly three hundred. Four of these Unions are composed of women—largely the American girls who do the

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<sup>1</sup>Journal of Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen, May, 1904.



lighter work in the packing houses. The first local was formed in Chicago in 1902, under the influence of the head worker of the social settlement of the stock yards neighborhood, and was carried along by the wave of Union enthusiasm until its numbers reached a figure between five and six hundred. Among these converts were many young girls who had little comprehension of what they were doing, and who, as the excitement died away and a counter-current of feeling arose, became indifferent or timid, and were unwilling to keep up their payments of fifty cents per month, or more. Their withdrawal reduced the membership to less than two hundred, and the present average attendance at meetings is thirty or forty. At the last convention of the general organization the representatives of the women's locals won the respect of the male delegates by their dignified bearing, and by the spirit and firmness with which they opposed the plan to prohibit women from working in the sausage rooms. None of the female meat trimmers were connected with the organization, but the Union girls felt the responsibility of representing the interests of their sex and of insisting upon living up to the Union principle of equality of treatment for all members. The feeling of the girls carried the convention, but the sausage butchers are still much disturbed at the presence of women in their field of labor, where the work has been so subdivided that a stout peasant woman is practically as satisfactory as an experienced man. Whether female laborers will continue in this department of work remains to be seen; the repulsive nature of the materials handled will certainly keep out American women, unless there occurs a marked degradation of the American standard of living and decency; but repeated reinforcements of foreigners may allow a considerable increase of peasant women who can with difficulty be brought into the Union. The unskilled character of the work, and the constant stream of immigrants flowing into the great western cities make the case of the girl workers in the Meat Cutters' Union a discouraging one, but those who have been associated with them during the short life of their

locals have faith that their good sense and unselfishness, and the training gained in concerted action, will prove the basis of a successful organization, able with the help of the male workers to meet the demand of their employers with firmness and strength.

#### 15. THE TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF CHICAGO

The connection of this association of professional women with the American Federation of Labor, an organization made up of hand workers, whose occupations are entirely different in nature and surrounding circumstances, is an anomaly that requires explanation. The teachers justify their action in seeking this affiliation not by any strained analogies, but by insisting upon the desirability of bringing the schools into direct contact with the people who patronize them and of preventing the adoption of "monarchical measures" of school policy by cooperating with this body of democratic voters. It is feared that the present undemocratic organization of politics and industry is passing into the school system and the teachers' association, deprecating such tendencies, uses all its energies in opposing legislation or official regulations which will result in centralizing authority and responsibility. In 1899 the school commission reported in favor of a system giving autocratic authority to the school commissioner; on protest of the teachers the recommendation was voted down. The Federation is now pushing a proposed amendment to the school law for Chicago which provides for a more certain system of promotions, limits the number of pupils for one teacher, gives the teachers a voice in deciding upon the incompetency of fellow teachers, and plans local and central teachers' councils for discussing school matters. These same measures look to the prevention of favoritism, increasing salaries, improving conditions of work, and giving the teachers an influence in the management of the schools. The best known work of this association is the famous suit occasioned by a cut of salaries at the beginning of the calendar and fiscal year, which the teachers claimed was illegal because



they had been hired at a given salary for the school year. The suit brought up the question of the cause of the cut, which the Board claimed, was lack of funds. Upon investigation by the teachers' attorneys five great corporations were found to be delinquent as tax payers and the court compelled the taxing authorities to collect \$2,000,000 for the year 1900. A temporary injunction stopped collection after \$600,000 had been obtained and the Board disposed of this money in other ways than upon deficient salaries. The court decided that the salaries should be paid, but appeal will be made to the higher courts. Altogether, the activity of this association is notable.

#### 16. THE WOMEN'S UNION LABEL LEAGUE

That trade unionists do not live up to their policy of purchasing, where possible, only label goods, is a statement often made both by outsiders and by Union officials themselves, and that this is true in one city at least has been proved by an unprejudiced investigator.<sup>1</sup> Especially are the women of wage workers' families accused of unfaithfulness in this regard. Since the outlay of a large part of the income of American families of all classes is determined by the wife and mother, this dereliction on her part is of considerable significance to those Unions which lay stress upon the demand for their label and ask special recognition of their cause from their brethren of other organizations. The demand has been none too successful, and now the interest of the women has been appealed to directly by a women's organization for the special purpose of emphasizing the importance of the label. The association is known as the Women's International Union Label League. It was formed in 1899 and its object, according to the general secretary, is "to promote the welfare of the wage earner; to discountenance the sweat shop methods of production by aiding and encouraging Union made goods; to gain a universal eight hour day; to abolish child labor; to secure equal pay for

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<sup>1</sup> Jas. Boyle, in a study made in Milwaukee, under the direction of the Department of Economics of the University of Wisconsin.

equal work regardless of sex; to aid the Sunday and early closing movement; to sustain fair employers and to aid in the study of social economics."

The activities of the society are in fact limited as a rule to the encouragement of the use of label goods. While sympathizers outside of the class of wage workers are eligible, the actual membership is largely made up of wives and daughters of Unionists and of women and men belonging to Unions. The organization of the society is modeled upon that of the ordinary Union, with provision for local, State, and International bodies. Dues are ten cents a month plus forty cents a year for the international treasurer, besides a death assessment of five cents, which is the basis of a benefit of \$50. The society has a membership of 3,000, is recognized by the American Federation of Labor, is encouraged by all the Unions pursuing the label policy, and is apparently doing good educational work in rousing an interest in the general condition of labor and in teaching the sacrifice of personal taste for principle. The possible development of the League, like that of the label policy to which it is subsidiary, is not likely to be of great significance or permanence, for the number of consumption goods to which the label can be effectively applied is too limited. For the manufacturers of all goods not meant for immediate consumption, for producers of expensive commodities of all kinds, the label has no value as an advertising medium, and for most large producers it is of little significance. Within a limited field, however, it does influence consumption and secures better conditions for the wage worker. Hence all Union sympathizers may well lend their aid to the Label League.

#### 17. WOMEN'S TRADE UNION LEAGUE

More recent even than the label society, and somewhat similar in purpose both to that organization and to the Consumers' League, is the Woman's Trade Union League, which proposes to make effective the sympathy and interest of women outside of the wage earning class by organizing them with women



Unionists for work supplementary to that of the Unions. The organization was formed during the convention of the Federation of Labor in Boston, in 1903, as a result of the efforts of an enthusiastic sympathizer and a capable Union woman. The idea is copied from that of the British association of the same name. It is believed that a goodly number of women who are interested in the welfare of women wage earners would be glad to assist in bringing before them the advantages of organization and in arousing the sympathy and cooperation of all classes for Trade Unionism. The fullest cooperation with the American Federation of Labor and with existing Unions is desired, for the League in no way proposes to take the place of any of these organizations. A secretary for the State, the unit of organization, will be expected to go out into all districts where trade conditions are known to be bad, to talk with the women employees, tell them of the advantages of combined action, and organize them or prepare the way for the organizer of the given trade. Speakers capable of presenting the cause of Unionism in a convincing way are to be sent to women's clubs to do something toward counteracting the middle class prejudices against the labor movement. Investigation of deleterious conditions of work and low wages has been already begun, the efforts of the Illinois Branch having resulted in some reforms in both respects. The organization begins its work at a time when, perhaps, it is most needed, but when it will be difficult to effect large results on account of the present hostile attitude of the public to Trade Unions and the beginning of a period of lower profits for employers.

#### 18. WOMEN'S UNIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN

It is perhaps worth while to close this study by sketching briefly the history of women's organizations in Great Britain, not only because industrial organization in the two countries is very similar, but also because there are in the older country several conditions that are favorable to a successful labor movement among female wage earners. Of these the most

important are that, since the establishment of the factory system, women have been employed in industry in great numbers; that Trade Unionism among men has here its greatest power and most elaborate organization, and that there exists a liberal public opinion regarding women's sphere of action. These favorable influences have been without result, as will be seen from a brief sketch of the movement. The earliest activity among women workers as a class occurred in 1827, after the repeal of the Combination Laws, and at a time when the cotton spinners were making pretentious efforts to form a national organization. Women's branches were formed and had a brief existence.<sup>1</sup> In 1833-34, a great mania for Trade Unions swept over the British working people; organizations sprang up in the most unskilled and insignificant trades, and the "Grand National Trades Union" promised to create a solidarity of interest and activity among the wage earners of the United Kingdom. It did actually enroll incredibly long lists of laborers of all sorts.<sup>2</sup> Women's Unions seem to have formed a part of this sporadic growth, for brief references in Union records tell of the short-lived activity of the "Grand Lodge of Operative Bonnet Makers", "Female Gardeners", and "Female Tailloresses", and others. But the whole growth was premature and unsubstantial and died down in a night; and while the healthy roots of the more vigorous men's organizations retained their life, the women's Unions left no trace but a few high-sounding names. For the next forty years—the middle third of the century—there appears to have been a total apathy among women workers in regard to bettering their condition by means of organization. Their welfare, however, was looked after by that combination of public-spirited men of all classes who, against great opposition, succeeded during this period in laying down the main outlines of the factory code. The policy of the labor leaders in these years is of especial interest, because of the peculiar false interpretation since put upon it

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Trade Union League Tract: Women as Trade Unionists.

<sup>2</sup> Webb, S. and B. History of Trade Unionism, 121.



Up to 1833 the advocates of short hours for factory operatives as a class had covered their far-reaching design with the plea of care for the welfare of the child workers; and when it was found that the reduction of hours for children had been so arranged as not to interfere with long hours for adults, they frankly admitted their real purpose and demanded restriction of motive power. This action was too radical for popular approval and the labor leaders then took up the advocacy of shorter hours for women as another possible method of limiting the working day for all, and fought their battle "behind the women's petticoats" from 1841 to 1847.<sup>1</sup> Again, in the seventies, a similar struggle was made for shorter hours for women, and the Unionists were accused of being desirous of limiting women's working hours in order to hamper their competition and thus supplant them. This accusation was a perverse interpretation of the action of the Unionists, whose motive, though selfish, was quite different from that attributed to them. The unexpected opposition that they met from the women workers and their friends brings us to the consideration of the first permanent organization of female wage workers. Ephemeral Trade Unions had appeared in this long period but had all collapsed after a brief existence. In 1872, there was established the first durable Union for women alone; and in 1874 Mrs. Patterson, an educated and capable working woman, having seen in New York the successful working of a Union of female umbrella makers, undertook the organization of various classes of London girls. She formed associations of book-binders, upholsterers, laundresses, and others. At the same time, with the help of a number of women of leisure and public spirit, she founded the Women's Protective and Provident League, a society whose aim was to aid poorly paid female wage earners to better their industrial condition, especially by means of organization. Mrs. Patterson and her associates were capable and sincere, but they held such radical opinions as to the efficacy of the electoral ballot for women

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchins, B. L., and Harrison, G. *A History of Factory Legislation*, 65.

that they were led to misinterpret the action of the Unionists in the short hours' movement. They opposed all legislation concerning hours and conditions of work for women with a vigor that was most disconcerting to those statesmen who considered themselves the special guardians of the interests of the wage workers.<sup>1</sup> This middle class view, that women should possess the freedom to determine their own conditions of work directly by contract, since they had no voice in making laws to improve them, involved of course, the bad logic of using the word freedom to indicate two very different conditions, that of the comfortable middle class house-wife or the woman of independent means, and also that of the resourceless, untrained factory operative competing for the chance to earn her daily bread in an overcrowded market. Fortunately, this conflict between the leaders of the women's organizations and the men's Unions has ceased, and the society for promoting women's Unions, under the unequivocal name of the Women's Trade Union League, now works in harmony and even in co-operation with the men's Unions.

The growth of the women's associations formed in the seventies was slow, and most of them led a precarious existence, viewed with suspicion or indifference by those whom they were meant to aid and scorned by the vigorous organizations of the men. Only gradually have male Unionists come to realize that women are a permanent factor in the labor question and that they must be taken account of in the program of labor organizations. The revival of Unionism in 1889 and 1890 included a liberalizing of the Unions in many directions, and among other reforms was a change in their attitude toward women's organizations. Although at first admitted only grudgingly and ungraciously to the Trade Union Congress<sup>2</sup>—a federal assembly corresponding roughly to our Federation of Labor Conventions—the women's representatives now enjoy a hearty welcome, if not an influential position, in this body. At each

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<sup>1</sup> Hutchins, B. L. and Harrison, G. *History of Factory Legislation*, 189, 193.

<sup>2</sup> Webb, S. and B., *History of Trade Unionism*, 406—408.



of these meetings for the last few years there has been held a conference of delegates from the trades in which women work, and also public rallies for the purpose of interesting the women of the locality in the subject of organization. Yet it must be acknowledged that the small number of representatives of women's Unions are unable to bring forward and force upon the attention of the convention important questions affecting women's interests.<sup>1</sup>

There are two types of Unions to which British women may belong, those composed of women exclusively and those including both sexes. The second class is by far the most important; in 1897 only twenty-five out of a hundred and thirty-nine Unions with women members were composed exclusively of women, and of these twenty-five the greater part were of recent growth.<sup>2</sup> In 1896 the women in the mixed locals constituted 93.6 per cent. of the total and at the same time it was estimated that only eleven per cent. of the 1,004,144 women in factories and workshops were in Unions.<sup>3</sup> The organizations composed entirely of women are confined largely to London, and have often been formed under stress of indignation over some particular grievance.<sup>4</sup> The enthusiasm following the success of the Dockers' strike in 1889 led to energetic efforts to organize the miserably paid tailoresses, watch makers, and others in the East End and elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> But the apathy, ignorance, timidity and extreme poverty were too fundamental to be overcome by any amount of energy upon the part of the organizers, and the exclusively women's associations are today a quite unimportant part of British Unionism. Yet the real gains of the few existing organizations must be taken into account; some have obtained increases in wages and other advantages and all do something to educate the more thoughtful and

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Trade Union Review, Oct., 1901, Jan., 1904; etc.

<sup>2</sup> British Board of Trade, Labour Correspondent, Report on Trade Unions, 1897, XXI.

<sup>3</sup> As above, Report for 1896, XVIII, XV.

<sup>4</sup> Hobson, J. A., Problem of Poverty, 161.

<sup>5</sup> Women's Trade Union Journal, Aug., 1889, and Oct., 1889.

serve as a nucleus round which the very ignorant can rally in time of need.<sup>1</sup> These rather puny societies of women monopolize the attention of the charitable outsiders who wish to aid in the movement, but it is among the textile workers that the largest number of women Unionists are found.<sup>2</sup> The cotton weavers of Lancashire constitute the largest part of these workers,<sup>3</sup> being about 80,000 out of 120,000 female Unionists. The extraordinary contrast between the numbers of Unionists in Lancashire and in other parts of the country is to be explained by the following facts: women have been organized with men since 1858; the management of these Unions has been particularly wise; women customarily continue in the factories after marriage, and hence feel the necessity of improving the conditions of their life work. The broad-mindedness of the men in thus early recognizing the importance of including their sister workers is less astonishing when one remembers that the larger part of workers in the cotton mills are women, and that the welfare of these women was brought into public notice by the earliest factory acts. The Scotch and Yorkshire textile Unions have never attained any strength, probably because of the facts that the leadership has not been so able and that the women do not continue work after marriage, as in Lancashire. Men's organizations in other trades are making vigorous efforts to gather in the women under their jurisdiction. The Boot and Shoe Workers have given up their own social evenings and substituted teas to which women are invited in order to interest them in the Union;<sup>4</sup> they also show their good will by electing with great show of cordiality two women delegates to their trades councils. The women book-folders are about to be made a branch of the printers' Union. The necessity of incorporating or affiliating the women's organizations with the men's Unions in the same trade is recog-

<sup>1</sup> Women's Trade Union League Tract, *Women as Trade Unionists*, 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> British Board of Trade, Labour Correspondent, Report on Trade Unions, 1900, XXII, gives them nine-tenths of the membership in 1900 and 1901.

<sup>3</sup> Tract as above.

<sup>4</sup> Women's Trade Union Review, Jan., 1904, 3, 21, 19.



nized by all those interested in the welfare of women wage workers. Indeed, it is declared by those most competent to judge that unless the men give them assistance, the organization of female laborers is doomed.<sup>1</sup>

A peculiar feature of the history of women's Unions in Great Britain has been the persistent efforts of women of the leisure classes to aid the movement. The women's Trade Union League employs organizers who agitate by means of noon hour and evening talks, personal visits, investigations, etc.; and teas and other social functions are employed to rouse or maintain interest in the subject of organization. Free legal advice, bringing to the attention of factory inspectors infringements of the law and working for new legislation are other features in the League's program. Altogether, these efforts seem sane and helpful, and if little has been accomplished it is due to the fundamental difficulties of the situation.

#### 19. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Character of the organizations in which women are found in largest numbers.

Two of the Unions considered are among the oldest and strongest in the United States (Typographical and Cigar Workers' Unions). The majority of the organizations are comparatively conservative and are becoming more so; in spite of general declarations of strongly socialistic principles, the policy is to avoid entanglement in practical politics; strikes are deprecated in public print, in discussions at conventions and in private conversation, and the tendency is to make it harder all the time for a local to obtain strike benefits from the general organization without having first tried all other means of adjustment of difficulties. All Unions are realizing the advantages of higher dues and larger benefits.

2. Women's status according to the constitutions.

Women are admitted to membership upon the same conditions as men and are given the same power of voting. They are

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<sup>1</sup> Women's Trade Union Review, Jan, 1904, 3, 21, 19.

eligible to all offices. In the stronger and more progressive Unions there are the same fees, dues, and benefits; in other trades where women's wages are very low, both dues and benefits are smaller for women.

### 3. Organization of locals.

Most Unions organize their locals according to the department of work; this usually results in associations that are predominantly male or female (as in the Boot and Shoe Workers); in trades where there is direct competition, mixed locals are the rule (as in the Typographical Union). So far as is known, little emphasis has been laid upon the general advantages of organizing women separately, as is the practice in Great Britain.

### 4. Women's activities in the Unions.

In women's locals they usually act as their own officers, except where they are quite inexperienced or where the local is very large and requires the services of paid officials (as in some shoe towns in New England). If there are any capable women to act as officers of the local, they are more likely to be successful in keeping up the interest than are the men in the same positions. Women are elected as delegates to conventions but in smaller proportions than their numbers justify.

In conventions they serve on committees. Several trades have women organizers. They have little or no influence in determining the general policy of the Union.

### 5. General estimate of women's effectiveness as Unionists.

They are not as well organized as men—a smaller percentage is in the Union than is in the trade. Nearly all officials testify that it is harder to organize women than men; a number say that, when they once do understand Union principles and become interested in the movement, they are excellent workers; there is a unanimous opinion that there are always some capable workwomen and active Unionists whose good sense and enthusiasm are of great advantage to the organization. A few officials say they are easy to organize but hard to hold up to pay-



ing their dues and attending meetings. All testimony goes to prove that they do not attend meetings and take as lively an interest in local affairs as men do. In time of strike the women's qualities show to best advantage; they are ready to sacrifice their own immediate interest and to hold out to the bitter end. On the other hand, their insistence on the exact claims made by them often tries the patience of the general officer who manages their case. They are as ready to strike as men and are sometimes misled by a local favorite into unwise measures of this kind. In the excitement of a strike they resort to violence even as their brother workmen do.

#### 6. Conditions under which women's organizations flourish.

Women's locals are likely to be prosperous in a locality where all trades are well organized and where the men workers have a strong Union and women's work is supplementary rather than competitive with men's; in trades where a comparatively high standard of intelligence is found; where women are American born (though of foreign parents). In five of the most important Unions studied the label policy is of great importance (Boot and Shoe Workers, Cigar Makers, Bookbinders, Garment Workers, Ladies' Garment Workers). In two of these the predominance of men is such that women may be brought into the Union and forced to keep up their dues without their having any interest in the organization. In these locals, while a majority of the women care little for the Union there are always some capable, thoughtful members who are active in Union affairs.

In trades where men are not largely in the majority the label policy probably brings into existence some women's locals that would not be formed under another system, for it is to the direct advantage of the men to rouse the interest of the women in the Union; and the employer, if convinced that it is to his advantage to unionize his shop, will also use his influence or compulsion to bring women into the organization. In small shops in the clothing trade, where most of the employees were

women who were indifferent to the Union, the locals forced upon them by tailors or masters proved short lived; but where there have been some capable independent women in the association thus formed, the seed of Unionism has fallen on good ground and successful locals grow up. In the Unions mentioned all officials emphasized the importance of the label.

7. Conditions unfavorable to women's effectiveness in Trade Unions.

Temporary conditions: In the "sweated" trades the hopelessness, low degree of vitality and of intelligence resulting from miserable wages and bad sanitary conditions are an effectual bar to women's activity in the movement. In certain trades the fear that the uniform scale demanded by the Union for men's and women's work will result in the displacement of women keeps them out of the organization. Women's interests have not been as carefully looked after by the Unions as those of men and less effort has been given to organizing them. In some industries women's presence in large numbers is recent; this explains in part the indifference of the men and the failure of the women to realize their own importance in the trade. Mixed locals composed largely of men are not a good field of work for women; they are too timid to express themselves in meetings which they often find disagreeable on account of tobacco smoke and tiresome from the long drawn out discussions in which they have no part.

Permanent difficulties: The fact that in a number of trades men are required to pass an apprenticeship of several years gives them a more vital interest in the trade than women, who learn a single process and may never become identified with one trade, but pass from one to another industry doing unskilled tasks in each. In many trades the majority of women are young girls who could not be expected to consider their industrial situation as a very serious matter. Women have more home interests than men and find there both duties and diversions, which men must seek outside and which they



find in their Union. Women have less vitality than men and attendance upon meetings and other activities carried on after the day's work is done means a greater effort for them than do like exertions for men. The fact that a large number of women wage earners are not dependent upon their own efforts for a livelihood makes them less anxious to struggle for a living wage. Many women hesitate to join a Union because they do not wish to be identified with the laboring classes. Of more importance than all other considerations is the fact that most women look upon factory work as a temporary employment filling up the time between school and marriage; this naturally results in an unwillingness to sacrifice any present for a future good, as is often necessary in the Union, or to give time and energy to build up an organization with which they will be identified but a few years. That some women do not marry and that others go back to the factory after marriage does not at all prove that they had not expected to give up work for home duties; many unforeseen events may prevent a woman's following the ordinary vocations of the home and many a woman who considers the factory unattractive in her youth, in later years finds the standard of living afforded by her husband's wages quite inadequate to satisfy her ambitions and the dull household routine less endurable than that of the shop.

NOTE.—This investigation has been confined, as indicated above, to the dozen important unions connected with the American Federation of Labor which have women members, not only because these include a very large part of the organized female wage earners, but also because they present the essential facts in the problem of organizing women; moreover, the difficulties to be overcome in obtaining information from small independent organizations are very great on account of a lack of complete lists of those outside the "Federation" and of the suspicion or indifference of local officers with whom the investigator can not come into personal relation. The officers of the large organizations are accustomed to receiving the inquiries of students, and have in the present case answered all letters promptly and satisfactorily, and but for their courtesy and generosity this study could not have been made.

The sketch of the Women Garment Workers is based upon the following sources of information: Mrs. Mabel Hurd Willett's, *Women in the Clothing Trade*, Columbia University Studies, vol. 16, No. 3, 1903; Twelfth Census, *Manufactures, 3 and Employees and Wages*; Report of the Committee on Sweated Trades (House of Representatives, 52nd Congress, second session); Hull House Maps and Papers, personal interviews with Union officials and recent numbers of the *Bulletin of the Clothing Trade*.



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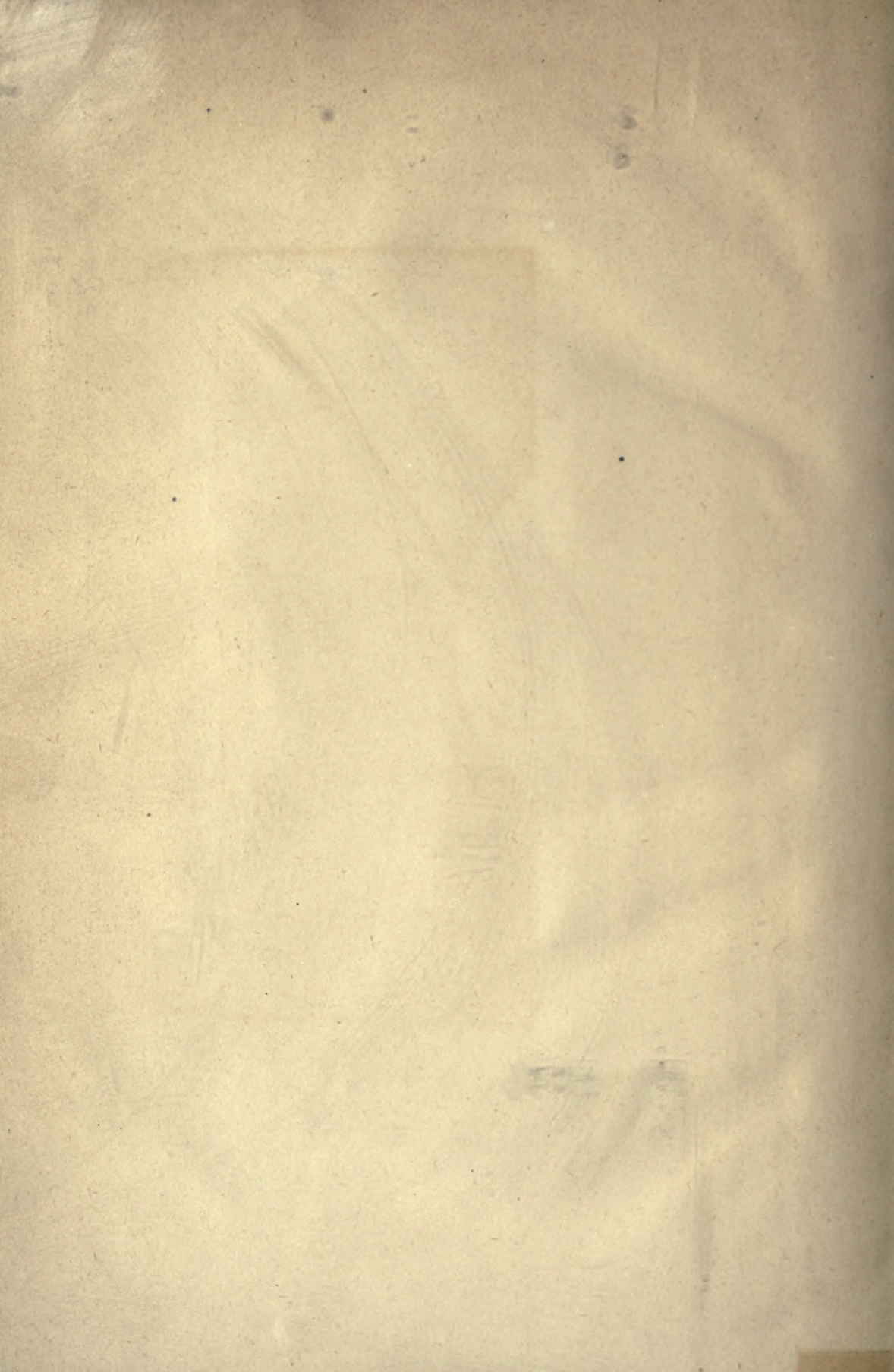
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